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THE OUTSIDER
AND
THE WORD OF GOD

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THE OUTSIDER AND THE WORD OF GOD

a study in Christian communication

JAMES E. SELLERS

Abingdon Press
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THE OUTSIDER AND THE WORD OF GOD

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TO MY PARENTS

and a family profession
of long standing—
journalism

PREFACE

A staggering number of people who go to church don't take it seriously. An even more staggering number just don't go. All too often such indifference is a sign that, for many, the Christian faith has lost its meaning.

This book is about such people. More exactly, it is about the church's failure with them and its chances of doing better.

Plainly the church does not seem to get through to many of the people it tries to reach. What can it do, if anything, to improve on the ways it goes about its assignment of speaking the word of God so that more will hear? The deepest need, we know to begin with, is for the church itself to hear better what God says to it and through it. But the church also must ask how it can best pass along what it hears to those who do not hear.

In the simplest terms the church's problem with these "outsiders" is the problem of Christian communication. It is a problem that cuts across the leadership of the church, clerical and lay.

Certainly it is the pastor's problem and the Christian educator's problem. If people don't go to church—or don't pay much attention when they do go—what they're not taking seriously are particular sermons, specific church-school classes, and definite congregations.

It is, however, also the problem of the denominational workers at large—the executive on evangelism, the curriculum builder, the organizer of new churches. It is the problem of the theologian who would "renew the church" and the problem of all who study theology.

Finally, it is a problem for the religious journalist and religion specialists of all mass media, since one of the great controversies is whether the techniques of mass communication can really benefit the church after all.

I have used the term "outsider" to cover all who turn deaf ears to the message of the church—both the church attenders and the nonattenders. It is not an ideal term, for in a sense we are *all* outsiders to the word of God. Yet it does have the merit of suggesting the most difficult thing about Christian communication, which is the fact that so many people stand, in effect, beyond or outside the church, preoccupied with other voices, other values.

To say what I have to say, it has been necessary to reckon with some fairly complicated theological and journalistic propositions. To offset any uphill work this might demand of the reader, the book ends with a statement—as furnished for action as I could make it—about the church's practical possibilities for speaking to the outsider.

Of those who have helped me in various ways, I must mention three teachers, later Vanderbilt colleagues—Professors Langdon Gilkey, Roger Shinn, and Bard Thompson—and two friends who have done me the service of arguing with me frequently and at length about the issues discussed here—Professor Gordon Kaufman, Vanderbilt University Divinity School, and Mr. Richard Rice, Methodist Board of Education.

JAMES E. SELLERS

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CHAPTER I

WHO IS THE OUTSIDER?

The modern church is bound to the church of the past by, among other things, the ties of inertia. It is not difficult for this church to assume that its preaching and its evangelism are unchanging and directed toward the same kinds of audiences that confronted Christian spokesmen in bygone ages. Until comparatively recent times these audiences consisted of two distinct and sharply separated sets of hearers. There was, on the one hand, the audience of non-Christians—the pagans, unbelievers, or nonadherents. There was, on the other hand, the audience of Christians—the faithful, believers, or church members. With the former audience the task was to proclaim the Christian faith as a strange, new way of life and urge entrance into the church. With the latter audience the task was to spur and revive lagging faith and to teach the faithful more about their religion and their church.

Granted that in such undertakings as mission work among non-Western peoples this old, crisp division of audiences can still be made realistically, the question remains: Is the old clean-cut distinction between the "outsider" and the "insider" a valid one for the Christian church to make nowadays in its everyday, local communication efforts? And are the methods of communicating with them still the same?

In this book I am going to argue that instead of a two-lobed audience neatly divided into Christians and non-Christians, the church today actually faces, in nearly every congregation and community, a new audience which is made up almost wholly of *outsiders to faith*. The members of this audience are strangers to the church in baffling and novel ways, and so they are not "pagans" in the usual sense of the word. Furthermore, there are two kinds of outsiders—one who stoutly claims to be an outsider but is partly a "hidden" Christian, and another who claims to be a Christian but is really a "hidden" outsider. This new audience of outsiders is to be approached by means radically different from the church's approach to outsiders of the past; and the two kinds of modern outsider cannot always be approached by the same methods.

Type 1: Christians by Osmosis

In his *Treatise on the Gods,* H. L. Mencken pokes fun—with considerable justification—at Christian theologians. He saves his sharpest blows for the church-centered who consider that the atheists and skeptics of our time, unlike the confirmed Christians, are going downhill toward "villainy" and "disaster." Mencken's own judgment—and it can hardly be denied—is that some of our unchurched citizens "show a considerably higher degree of virtue than the Christian average." Mencken, however, laughed at the theory that moral values and other qualities of character in modern skeptics might have been furnished them in some way by the Christian religion. Considering this hypothesis, Mencken scoffs:

> In other words, Thomas Henry Huxley was a Christian by osmosis, and without being aware of it. He eschewed adultery and committed no murders because he breathed the virtuous exhalations of the Archbishop of Canterbury.[1]

An equally pungent denial of the influence of Christianity on modern Western culture has been issued by Bertrand Russell. All religion to date has made only two useful contributions to civilization, he declares. "It helped in early days to fix the calendar, and it caused Egyptian priests to chronicle eclipses with such care that in time they became able to predict them." Both of these contributions antedate Christianity itself. Indeed, the net effect of Christian faith on Western culture, according to Russell, is negative rather than positive. Just as the churches long opposed the ending of slavery, so they today, "with a few well-advertised exceptions," oppose every movement toward economic justice. Christian obscurantism on divorce, sex, and marriage "is dangerous to human welfare." All in all, to accept the traditional Christian doctrines demands "a great deal of ethical perversion." [2]

It would be idle to outline the ways in which a sensitive, prophetic voice like Russell's is beholden to the point of view of the Old and New Testaments. One example, drawn from Russell's theological tract, *What I Believe*, will have to do.

Treating such problems as the meaning of salvation and what it means to be happy, Russell writes: "The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge." He has no hesitation in pronouncing love to be the more important of these two attributes, "since it will lead intelligent people to seek knowledge, in order to find out how to benefit those whom they love."

If modern Western culture has had to choose between two leading ideas, they are these: (1) the Hebraic-Christian notion that *love* is the primary force in men's lives and leads them to education and other facets of the good life; (2) the classical Greek notion that *knowledge* is the primary force, that it leads men out of hatred and ignorance, that it enables them to do the good. Though it is no doubt an uncomfortable position for anyone who is allergic to the Christian church, Russell places himself inevitably much closer to Augustine than to Socrates in his choice of love as the prime datum.

An even more revealing case is that of Karl Jaspers, the German existentialist philosopher. If by the church we mean an institution, and if by Christianity we mean certain set teachings or dogmas, then Jaspers is clearly an avowed outsider. Yet he has often written approvingly of the biblical faith [3] and his philosophy abounds with conceptions which have their counterparts in Christian theology. Though we may be able to do without formal revelation no one can do without vertical "Transcendence." The mysteries of God become, in Jaspers' language, the "ciphers" of Transcendence. The biblical judgment against salvation by works becomes recognition of our limits as we come up against the "boundary situations" of life. In his own way, if not as in Christian theology, Jaspers has a place for guilt. The transforming and transfiguring power of prayer has its opposite number for Jaspers in the life of "Reason." The greatest force binding men is called charity in the Bible, and this idea has its echo in Jaspers' remark: "The power of communication originates in love." [4]

Not only Russell, Mencken, and Jaspers, but all members of Western society possess central values in common with the church. Three hundred years after the philosophic challenge hurled at it by Descartes, says Arnold J. Toynbee, Christianity "was still being . . . inhaled by every Western man and woman with the air they breathed."

> Moreover, even if we have now at last succeeded in sloughing off our Christian heritage, the process of apostasy has been slow and laborious, and with the best will in the world we are unlikely to have carried it through with the thoroughness that we might wish; . . . When Descartes and Voltaire and Marx and Machiavelli and Hobbes and Mussolini and Hitler have done their best to dechristianize our Western life, we may still suspect that their scouring and fumigating has been only partially effective. The Christian virus or elixir is in our Western blood.[5]

Even the forces and institutions which seem to us the most powerful opponents of Christianity contain "a strong tincture of its own essence [in] the very disinfectants that are so vigorously applied to sterilize it." The elements of Communism palpably bear "their certificate of origin from the ancestral religious faith of the West"—Christianity and Judaism. American business life, no promoter of the inward Christian virtues, is in some respects an outgrowth of John Calvin's interpretation of Christian faith. In a sense, American democracy itself is a secular replica of the Church—offering, not a spiritual salvation, to be sure, but deliverance based on economic abundance.[6]

And so all members of Western society are in a sense "Christians by osmosis." That is one reason some would designate this a "post-Christian" age: many of the leading beliefs and values which came into our culture from the Christian faith have now become common coin, no longer wearing the explicit label of "Christian." They form part of the basic moral awareness even of those members of society who do not consider themselves churchmen, or even Christians. Moreover, certain leading Protestant religious ideas appear to have the greatest persistence when they are stripped of churchly authority. So argues John Paul Williams, who points out that Protestantism's influence among the "unchurched" is strong, but primarily ethical. "These ethically-minded persons have adopted Judeo-Christian moral standards, but insist that they can lead just as good a life outside the Church as they can inside." [7]

This tendency to remove the explicit Christian label from our inherited religious beliefs is to be found at work within, as well as beyond, the organized arms of the church. In 1959 delegates of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America voted to merge. It was only after a dramatic reversal of themselves, however, that the delegates decided to retain mention of the Judaeo-Christian heritage. The agreement to merge, as originally approved, contained this objective: "To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, and immemorially summarized in their essence as 'love to God and love to man.' " The words "the Judaeo-Christian heritage" were added to replace the words "their essence," a Universalist concession.

Type 2: Christians with Roving Eye

There is one more reason for calling this a "post-Christian" age. If the members of Western society at large no longer need adhere to organized Christianity in order to hold Christianized ideas, the reverse is also true: people in our society who sincerely call themselves Christians now exhibit a great many secularized values which have nothing especially to do with Christian faith, and even less to do with the traditional interests of the organized church.

Roger Williams, founder of the Baptists in this country and exponent of separation of church and state, might well be astounded at certain practices among his successors. Today Baptists of both major conventions, American and Southern, willingly allow their pastors to receive government pay and wear military uniforms as chaplains of the armed forces. Thousands of American Christians in the twentieth century feel that their prayers should seek not so much eternal happiness in some world beyond as ordinary present benefits. They agree with George Crane that one of the fruits of church attendance is "less ulcer, less high blood pressure," longer life. Whether another benefit is eternal life, as traditional Christian faith has steadfastly maintained, they do not seem to care.

In a survey of popular religious books published over the period 1875-1955, two sociologists concluded of them: "A powerful stress on salvation in this life rather than the next prevails, and there is correspondingly slight preoccupation with the agencies of salvation in the next life." [8] Even though salvation of the body and for the here-and-how is an old, respected strand of biblical thought—going back all the way to the Old Testament—still the inference seems justified that in twentieth-century America the preoccupation of nominal Christians with the ordinary task of providing for themselves a share of the country's abundance has steadily encroached on the traditional Christian interest in eschatological salvation.

We must add to this shift in interest of the American Christian his lessened physical association with the church—now an hour or so a week at most for the average church-goer—and the increased competition of other agencies—school, business, the state—for his ear. The upshot is that the members of the Christian denominations have become less "totally committed" to the church as an organizer of their lives and a guide of their beliefs.

There are always exceptions, to be sure. At the very time the Unitarians and the Universalists were almost of a mind to throw off the Judaeo-Christian label, the Hutterites in Canada were causing problems by their very refusal to live an ordinary, secularized existence. Their self-contained lives depressed commerce, merchants complained.

The Hutterites, however, are a tiny minority. Most of their churchgoing neighbors, both in Canada and the United States, now are inclined to define Christianity to a large extent in terms of participation in secular life. Indeed the denomination itself, which has replaced the "church" and "sect" as typical ecclesiastical forms, draws its distinctive character from the fact that the Christian life is largely secularized. According to James H. Nichols, a historian of the modern church, the denomination actually takes on but one or two of the traditional tasks of the church—worship, religious education, half-hearted ethical discipline—activities which do not include all, or the most important parts, of the Christian life. He adds:

> The denomination entrusts the remaining functions of the church, such as guidance in the major ethical decisions of life, to nonecclesiastical organizations, the state, public school, and the business corporation.[9]

This acceptance of outside management for completion of denominational life has its counterpart in the value system of the individual Christian. W. H. Whyte, Jr. describes an interview with a young banker who was an enthusiastic lay leader of a church in one of our large suburban housing developments. Here is the banker's reason for enthusiasm:

> For the last two years I have been chairman of the board of the church, a job held by a fifty-five or sixty-year-old man in most communities. This gives me a training valuable in business. The church is a corporation with a $50,000 budget, and we've had to think about a $100,000 capital loan. How else could people our age get a chance to deal with that much capital? [10]

The banker, no doubt, was perfectly sincere and completely unaware that he was importing outside values to strengthen his role as a Christian leader. But even where the laymen is well conscious of the conflict between inner Christian values and the decisions imposed on him by his professional life, he often feels there is nothing he can do but give in to the secular values. A French Christian, Jean-Marc Gaillard, physicist by profession, writes in *Foi et Vie* (Sept.-Oct., 1959) of the tension in his life between "the scientific personage that I am and the man that I would like to be." On the one hand, the ideal of Christian vocation requires him to be as good as possible at his job; on the other hand, he says, "I become less and less a man in the degree that my scientific knowledge takes on more importance."

We are forced to conclude that *adherents* to the organized church (if we except groups like the Hutterites) are not at the full disposal of Christian authority in the Reformation sense because many—or most—of us are partly captive in a technical age to secularized values. The church now is composed largely of Christians who express a "need for religion" but do not expect this religion to have any crucial bearing on their lives beyond the church—the realm where the important decisions have to be made. There is nothing new in the dilemma of "believing disbelief," since the New Testament records the familiar prayer: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." What is new is the problem of *unfocused loyalties*—of the simple inability of members of modern society to orient their lives about peculiar Christian values or to look single-mindedly to the message of the church for guidance. From the point of view of the communicator of the Christian message there is no longer, properly speaking, a "gathered" Christian congregation to hear him. The realities of our world make us forevermore unable to model proclamation to Christian society upon the example of Anselm, or Luther, or the Anabaptists. If the church has endowed Western culture with its principal presuppositions, it by no means follows that it is a churchminded Christian culture or that the voice of the church now says the same thing to the Christian that he would have heard in an older dispensation.

No doubt many of the various institutions and forces which now have access to the awareness of the Christian are congruent enough in their goals to aspects of the gospel. Yet the man who is subjected to these calls still lacks what in the days of gathered congregations and frequent Bible reading amounted to a decisive and final guiding voice, a principle of divine coordination among chaotic calls. The Christian must choose, not only between various grades of evil, but also between various degrees of good; and he can waste his life on the good if he does not know how to find the best.

A World of Outsiders

So the modern church faces a society that is post-Christian and made up of outsiders of two varieties. One variety consists of non-Christians who accidentally, and without specific loyalty to the church or its tradition, embrace Christian concepts and values. The other variety consists of nominal Christians who entertain, along with everyone else, the ordinary goals and purposes of our age and who make their decisions basically in accordance with secular circumstances.

I do not deny, of course, that in addition there may be Christians of a third type—that is, sanctified insiders who do not take their bearings from the world, but rather live steadfastly, or nearly so, by the gospel. Nor do I deny that the hope of the church is to make insiders of all the outsiders; but I expect that development to be completed only at the close of the age, and until that time, I submit, the church must be concerned with a world of outsiders.

Before we turn to some of the problems which arise for communication from our conception of the outsider we must consider a serious objection: that is the insistence of Karl Barth that it is fruitless to think of the recipient of Christian communication as secularized, or as an outsider. To understand Barth's point, we may conveniently turn to a recent writing of his entitled *The Humanity of God.* Barth argues that his early insistence on God as "wholly other," breaking in on us "perpendicularly from above," though a right and needed emphasis, may have been both too nakedly stated by him and misunderstood by others. His teaching that God is everything—as necessary as it was—led inadvertently to an unwarranted conclusion: that man, counting for little, is set apart from God in a decisive manner. "We viewed this 'wholly other' in isolation, abstracted and absolutized," he recalls, "and set it over against man, this miserable wretch—not to say boxed his ears with it." That opened the way for a new hopelessness about human deeds. It encouraged a pessimistic freedom, a new autonomy, a new secularism that "we did not intend or want." [11] In short, Barth did not intend to make an *outsider* of God's highest creation.

Barth then goes on to tell what he really means by "the deity of the living God." This God "has his meaning and his strength only in the context of his history and dialogue with *man* and thus in his *being-together* with him." This does not mean he is not a sovereign God, based only in himself, dependent only on himself, and limited and ordered only by himself. Still,

> who God is, and what he is in his deity, that he demonstrates and reveals not in the empty space of a divine isolation, but rather authentically just where he exists, speaks, and acts as the partner of man (though he is certainly absolutely superior). Who does *that* is the living God. And the freedom in which he does it is his deity. It is the divinity which as such also has the character of humanity.[12]

It is God's way-of-being, then, to offer his guidance and fellowship to man. It is, accordingly, man's way-of-being to live within God's care. Man is not really man until he is taken in by God through the new humanity offered in Christ. Thus, when theologians start talking about the problem of the outsider and the proper language with which to address him, they make a false start. We should not begin there, because of the humanity of

God: "We cannot seriously assume that there are any *real* 'outsiders,' or that we have to do with a 'world come of age.' " The so-called outsider is only an insider who has not yet recognized himself as such, just as our world is only a world that *takes* itself to be of age.

Besides, Barth adds, even the most persuaded Christian is an outsider. Before God there is no point in distinguishing higher and lower forms of unfaithfulness; therefore, there is no particular point in seeking special language for insiders and outsiders. "Men of the world of our age are both—we all are."

We must take Barth quite seriously, of course. We must indeed avoid making the recipient of communication into an absolute outsider, for this would be to set him apart from God in an imputed autonomy and would deny that God is "together" with men as their partner. Further, it would make a hypocrite of the proclaimer, who would have to take himself invidiously to be a certified insider if he can think of his recipient purely as an outsider.

On the other hand, at the present stage of history men have not yet realized full partnership with God. We are all—even as recipients of religious communication—relative outsiders. Every serious Christian must think of himself as forever crossing the boundary from the status of outsider to that of insider. Significantly, the New Testament speaks of the "old man," whom the Christian knows in himself as a very present reality, in just the same terms as it uses for the pagans.[13] Thus, in the deepest sense, we are found together as outsiders as well as insiders. We are therefore entitled to communicate with one another in language that outsiders can understand.

This deep-seated quality of "outsideness" is a character of faith not only for us but for every historical epoch. In our secularized age it takes two concrete forms—first, as the non-Christian who is an avowed outsider, although concealing some insider's virtues without knowing it; and second, as the nominal Christian who, despite his partial attainment of standing inside, heedlessly lives most of his existence as an outsider.

Now we must turn to some of the communicative problems which arise from the fact that we are a world of outsiders.

Speaking to the Outsider

In most former ages the church has proceeded with the proclamation of its message by drawing a line between itself and the rest of society. The Christian has always been "in," but not "of," the world. Though his objective as a witness may have been to bring the world into the church, still this process has not, in the past, erased the boundary. Those who belonged to the church were those who heard the message and acted upon it (though they remain imperfect in word and deed); those who belonged to the world were those who had not heard the message—or those who heard the message and rejected it (which, in the biblical manner of speaking, is another way of saying "those who have not heard.")

Today the church may no longer draw a sharp line for purposes of proclamation between itself and the world. Nonadherents, as we have seen, are not simply "pagans" in the classical sense, because most of them possess some Christianized values. They are curious atheists like Bertrand Russell, who can consciously rank love above knowledge—or, as an earlier age would have put it, Jerusalem above Athens. Nor are the *adherents* as single-mindedly committed, in their attention and interests, to the voice of the church as were their Christian ancestors of the Middle Ages, the Reformation—and even the American frontier. This is not to deny the sincerity and the good intentions of many practicing Christians; it is simply to recognize the make-up of life and the real source of decisions today even among the faithful. All of us, both avowed Christians and avowed non-Christians alike, then bear witness to the Christian faith *and* deny its importance. Our society is at the end of a long process of decline in commitment to the Christian tradition. Consequently, the communication efforts of the church must largely be addressed to outsiders—and of a new kind—who know just enough of the faith to make it dangerous.

From the point of view of the communicator, addressing these modern outsiders means, very simply, addressing men who do not appear disposed to listen to what the church has to say. A French Protestant visiting Scotland during "Kirkweek," an ecumenical effort at reviving faith and part of the "Tell Scotland" movement sponsored by the Iona community and nearly all of the Protestant churches in Scotland, was struck with this quality of "deafness" among the Scottish people at large:

> My neighbors did not know what Kirkweek was. At Dundee, during all of this week, most of the meetings were open to the public, thanks to a minimum admission price. But in this city of close to 200,000, nearly no one appeared. . . . Scotland, fully Protestant as it is, can claim only a minority of practicing Christians; and only a minority of this minority gives any attention to the Christian message.[14]

On this view, it is easy enough to settle upon the designation of "outsider" for virtually the whole of a Christian population. Nevertheless, the church in its communication effort must continue to differentiate on some basis between the adherent and the nonadherent—even though both merit the standing of outsider. As ever, with the non-church members, the task of the church is to raise the question of open, explicit commitment, not only to the Christian faith, but to the organized church as well. This is now more difficult than the old task of addressing a genuinely non-Christian (i.e., pre-Christian) audience, because the Christianized values reposing in the consciousness of our society make it easy for men to be "Christians" without decisive allegiance either to Christ or his church and to hold an ethical value system and do good without embracing faith in God. When the recipient of churchly communication is under the impression that he is already Christianly religious, the call to formal commitment seems irrelevant. Worse, when the recipient's picture of the world converts the old orthodox Christian categories into cultural attributes, the communicator has left few, if any, distinctive Christian terms with which to speak and to specify the meaning of deliberate commitment.

On the other hand, with the adherent or church member the problem is to encourage fresh participation in the faith which he may hold only indifferently or in trivial fashion. Here, too, the problem is more difficult communicatively than it was in the Middle Ages or during the Reformation. For the modern American Christian finds too many demands impinging on him from outside and beyond the organized church. Thus the church's call on him, mediated as the specialized concern of a denomination, may become simply another institutional burden, another program of things to do, rather than a clear challenge to refresh his faith—and hence all his works—in renewed attachment to the cause of Christ.

We must keep in mind, then, the distinction that is to be made between adherents to the church and nonadherents. Though both groups are on the whole outsiders, communication with each has special problems.

The Special Problem of the Nonadherent

The task of speaking to the non-church member is doubly complicated by the fact that most of the church's present-day effort at communication of the gospel seems designed, after all, for those who in some sense already adhere to the church. Most preaching in this country, according to one teacher of homiletics, is usually directed toward a "believing" audience, a group of listeners presumed in advance to be "kindly disposed toward the central idea and the speaker." [15] Similarly, religious-education activities are conventionally centered around the task of "nurture" and the promotion of "growth" among those already introduced to the community of faith. Even when churches *try* to reach outsiders with mass media, the audiences they actually draw are usually composed "almost wholly of the faithful, rather than of potential converts." [16] Religious communication as conventionally practiced tends to reach, over and over, "the already persuaded."[17]

Although the Protestant pastor is not really tied to a special religious sphere—he is on the same basis before God as other Christians—too often his language seems based on the assumption that he must use a special ecclesiastical vocabulary. In the task of witnessing to the gospel in his sermons, however, he ought not to forget the included duty of thinking about how to communicate with "people who are strangers to the church." Without denying that this same problem is important for the minister in his internal parish work, we can say it is evident that the church's efforts to attract the outsider are greatly hampered by failure to consider the problem of communication with the nonadherent.

"We shall have to bend our minds far more seriously to the problem of speaking to the man in the street, who is only sometimes, or never, in the pew," says David H. C. Read. "It is in this kind of proclamation that we are failing so miserably." [18]

Since apostolic days the most controversial area of Christian communication has been the attempt to speak the church's message to those beyond the church. In our own time the mission of reaching the unchurched outsider is more complicated than ever, as we have seen.

The Ever-present Need of Revival

A task equally important is the responsibility which comes to the religious proclaimer in every generation "of clarifying the meaning of the Gospel for that generation." [19] It is one of the commonplaces of our church life that people who call themselves Christians very often know next to nothing about the Christian religion. Anyone who has appeared as a resource person at the Wesley Foundation, Baptist Student Center, or Canterbury House knows how ignorant college students are of the beliefs and backgrounds of their denominations. Fortunately, he is also often made aware of the eagerness of these students to learn something of these beliefs and backgrounds. This illiteracy is also visible in that speculative curiosity which runs through

Sunday-school classes—for youth and adults alike—about "where we got our Bible," "how we differ from Moslems in our beliefs," "what John Calvin really said about predestination."

Merely bringing Christians into the fold is never enough. Neither is it sufficient to educate them in the lore of their faith. The pressing task, and really the *only* one, as Kierkegaard has reminded us, is to make them understand what it means when they "assume the name of Christians . . . give themselves out to be Christians." [20] Every Christian community, it seems, runs the risk of forgetting this assignment. Christian leaders as far removed in time and space from each other as Chrysostom, Luther, and Dwight L. Moody have considered the "reviving of faith" among nominal adherents a primary matter of business for the church.

Just as the problem of speaking to the avowed outsider is enormously complicated by the twentieth century's kind of world, so is the contemporary job of speaking to the adherent now much more complex. Even the nineteenth-century American revivalists could anticipate that church members would make the church their main point of focus, both for receiving guidance in making decisions and in carrying out their Christian duties. No longer can we make such an assumption. The church's audience of members—even "believing" members—is partly, perhaps largely, secularized. How is the church to show the relevance and meaning of the gospel to such divided and torn souls?

The Scramble for Mass Media

In an editorial entitled "The Scramble for Radio-TV," the conservative Protestant fortnightly *Christianity Today* spoke for most of Protestantism when it declared: "Religious movements rightly consider radio and television as strategic channels to the American home." The editorial goes on, not so much to condemn the scrambling of religious movements for choice radio and television time, as to deplore the fact that "liberal" Christianity seems about to grab off more of this time than the conservative forces.

Cyrus Mack, director of the broadcasting and film commission of the National Council of Churches, has gone so far as to say that the unchurched audience cannot be reached by religion at all except through mass media. The plea is more and more often heard that what is needed is not only a rethinking of the role that the mass media should play in the church's task of communicating but also far more efficient means of training ministers in the expert use of mass communications media.

The most striking evidence of all is the eagerness with which church movements are actually moving into new areas (for them) of the mass media. The Methodist Church's entry into national magazine publishing with its multicolored family monthly *Together* (now carrying national advertising and claiming circulation of over a million) has been followed by such projects as *Hi Way*, a general-interest youth magazine published by the United Presbyterian Church in the United States. The first issue of the Presbyterian journal contained such articles as: "Why I'm Heading Into Space," by one of the seven men chosen by the government for space-travel experiments; "New Fall Clothes," "How to Size Up a Used Car," and an article by a psychiatrist warning against the dangers of trying too hard to be popular. Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, an institution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (Southern) applied to the Federal Communications Commission in 1959 for authority to operate a commercial broadcasting station—the first such application from a theological school in this country. Southern Baptist agencies in 1960 installed a teletypewriter network designed for fast transmission of news, statistics, and other information among key cities and offices.

Yet this enthusiasm for the mass media and the increasing use of print, film, radio, and television by church groups opens up as many problems as it solves. The argument is often heard that the church's message of grace can hardly be transmitted effectively by media essentially designed to carry messages about the opposite of grace, i.e., human deeds and material possibilities. The church cannot "advertise" or engage in self-promotion of any kind, the argument goes, without making itself into something other than a "suffering servant." The media have developed their present overwhelming strength since about 1890, when professional communicators began to depend on advertising—and indirectly on the consumer—to bear the cost of publishing rather than readers. David Potter, in his study of the influence of abundance on American character, describes advertising as the primary agency in a cultural development which assumes the American citizen to be only a consumer. Media which thrive on that conception of man must have little or nothing in common with the distinctive purpose of the church, "representing the force of religion," which "conceives of man as an immortal soul."

At the very least, say the critics, undue concentration on the mastery of techniques leads the church away from its real interest in the gospel. The recipients of any institutional message transmitted over the ordinary mass channels tend increasingly to be considered as remote abstractions, as "the public"; but the church must depend for the strength of its message on being able to speak to people as individuals, either singly or in closely knit groups, such as the local congregation. Techniques have taught us to cease relying on God and have given us the illusion of being entirely self-reliant, argues Gabriel Marcel. By taking over techniques, including the techniques of mass communication, and by regarding them as automatic savers of the human situation, we have neglected grace. Reawakening of faith, he insists, can come only from reliance on something diametrically opposite to the use of techniques.[21]

Clearly enough, then, there are two sides to this question about the usefulness of mass communication devices and techniques in the work of proclaiming the gospel to modern men. On one side are those who mistrust techniques, who doubt that what is transmitted by them can have much in common with Christ's inward call to men to give up their lives and relax their claims, trusting entirely in God. On the other side are those who believe that the church can reach men via mass media with a saving message. That it may, at most, suffer some loss of effectiveness because of the impersonality of mass communication, these leaders concede. On the other hand, if it were not for such devices as television and the "prayer telephone," some men might not be reached at all by the church today. So argue the advocates of mass media.

When we weigh these claims, two things seem certain: (1) The church, as an institution of twentieth-century society, seems to be inevitably engaged in—and doubtless is committed for the foreseeable future to—the serious use of mass media. (2) Yet there is neither a clear conscience among churchmen about the rightness of relying on mass media nor any certain knowledge about what uses are the best ones for the church to make of these devices. Many of us feel, for example, that the church has not only the duty of preaching and of "saving souls," but also the duty of acting as a responsible agency for social action in contemporary society—and perhaps the mass media are much more suited to the latter of these tasks than the former.

In our study of the church's modern communication, then, we must positively assume that the problem includes finding a legitimate role for mass communication devices and techniques. That is, we cannot in advance jump to the conclusion of some that the mass media have no part in the church's mission. Nor can we, on the other hand, jump to the infinitely more popular conclusion of our era—that the church may stake its whole program and hope on the expert use of mass communications procedures. We have to avoid what David Read calls the two main heresies of Christian communication. First, there is the "Continental heresy," so called because it is based on doctrines of the European dialectical theologians, especially the early writings of Karl Barth. This heresy, according to Read, consists in ignoring the condition of the hearers of the word on the assumption that human effort or skill can add nothing either to God's word or to the ability of the recipient to hear it. It is, says Read, "almost a denunciation of all human effort to mediate the Gospel to our world." Second, there is the heresy (especially associated with American Christianity) which glorifies techniques and defines the problem of religious communication as largely a matter of skill, equipment, and method. "Psychological research, high-pressure advertising, opinion-polls, mass-suggestion, success-stories, modern business methods—these are the methods by which the masses are to be swept into the Christian fold." [22] The peril of the first heresy is that it will lead the church into a failure, through sophistication or pure laziness, to see the need for effective preaching. The peril of the second is that it will lead the church to shift its emphasis from the truth of the gospel to the ability of men to solve their problems for themselves.

In short, we must assume even before we begin our investigation that we may well renounce our responsibility as churchmen and mistreat our fellow men either by not using techniques or by using them obsessively beyond the requirements of the situation.

These are the problems, then, which confront the church as it goes about its communication activities, whether through preaching, the religious education program, or evangelistic effort.

In this book we will not be able to do full justice to every single one of the problems. Much of our attention, rather, will be forced upon the most pressing of the questions—the one which concerns the more or less unchurched outsider. In other words, this is a book about the problems of apologetics, or the church's program of speaking beyond itself to the outside world. But our study of this problem will only lead in the end, as we shall see, to enlightenment on each of the other leading questions which we have turned up. The avowed adherent is very often practically identical to the avowed, nonadherent outsider in his tenuous relations with organized religion. For example, a New Mexico woman wrote *Time* magazine to express her support of a speech by Julian Huxley attacking organized religion. "The ideas expressed by Sir Julian Huxley," she said, "are the very thoughts which give my 'creedless' church (Unitarian) a creed."

Our first task, then, is to examine the current controversy in the Christian church over the place of apologetics. Next, for historical perspective, we will examine the classical approach to the outsider as developed by the Christian apologists of the second century. In a final series of chapters we will study the usefulness of mass media in the contemporary approach to outsiders, present-day efforts of Protestantism to reach the outsider, and the completion of the communication task that is realized only when the outsider is brought into view as an insider.

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CHAPTER II

CAN WE MAKE CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDER?

The outsider to the church is everywhere in our society. He is not just the beatnik who attempts to rebuild life apart from the religious and social structure of America. He is not just the atheist or agnostic. He is also the businessman who insists he can worship God on the golf course. He is even the churchman—or churchwoman—who shows up for worship at 11:00 A.M. each Sunday—but who makes his really important decisions in accordance with "outside" interests such as social obligations, business arrangements, and cultural customs.

How can the church really say something to these people—*as outsiders?* This problem can never be solved simply by clothing our proclamation to him in plain words. Using familiar (and exciting) language will help, to be sure. But the problem is deeper and more fundamental than the one of finding the right vocabulary. It is a problem of *point of view,* of basic *approach.* Oftentimes, both in past eras and in the present, churchmen have failed to communicate with outsiders not because of an inability to find words, but rather because of theological restrictions on the very effort! So powerful have been these restrictions that we must now face the question: *Can we make contact with the outsider at all?* And if so, how?

In Naples, Father Mario Borelli, a Roman Catholic priest of thirty-nine, drew an assignment especially pleasing to him—working with Neapolitan youth. He had long been interested in the *scugnizzi,* the vagrant urchins of the city who lived as pimps, petty smugglers, pickpockets, and robbers of besotted American servicemen. In his new undertaking, however, he met defeat from the first. These hard-eyed youths would not come near the Church of Mater Dei, which was to be the teen-age meeting center; neither would they talk to a priest. To them a cleric, like a policeman, was a symbol of the enmity which society bore them.

If the *scugnizzi* would not come to the church, Father Borelli decided, the church would have to go to them—and not in the stereotyped figure of a priest that would drive the boys still further away. He wanted them to have a chance really to hear and see the church's word of mercy and interest before they could be repelled by a distasteful symbol. So the young priest removed his clerical garb, put on dirty street clothes, and joined a gang of *scugnizzi* as another homeless drifter.

In time the urchins came to trust and respect the older man, and perhaps to sense that his interest in them was more than a personal matter. Although they had regularly and with suspicion rejected his suggestions that they visit the Church of Mater Dei, the situation suddenly changed for the better: one winter night three of them appeared at the church door along with the man who had become their companion.

Later Father Borelli appeared among his young friends in his cassock. At first, none of the *scugnizzi* recognized him. Then their faces registered recognition—and astonishment. Finally, as *Time* described the incident, "they crowded in to touch his habit and kiss his hand." He was eventually providing shelter and supervision for eighty former *scugnizzi*. This was all the result of his conviction that "children will always go to open arms and open hearts."

If Father Borelli's approach to the urchins of Naples were described in the categories of contemporary Protestant theology, we would say he had created a "point of contact" with them. Consciously putting aside—for the time being at least—a symbol of the church meaningful to insiders but repellent to these young outsiders (i. e., his clerical garb), he borrowed a symbol from the outsiders (i. e., the unkempt dress of a *scugnizzo*). For the time being he was forced by this strategy to cease proclaiming in any explicit way the doctrines of his church. In his period of "hidden identity" not even when the *scugnizzi* rolled a drunk did this priest reveal his secret by preaching or referring to the teachings of the church. In such situations he merely pretended to be indifferent.

Since the advent about 1917 of the theological movement associated with Karl Barth, Protestant theologians have engaged in vigorous and sometimes heated discussion about the validity of seeking a "point of contact" for dealing with outsiders to faith. The thinking on both sides of this controversy is of the highest importance for our study of Christian communication. In fact, it is only by understanding the issues in the great twentieth-century battle over point of contact that we can comprehend the real seriousness of the problem of addressing the outsider by means of mass communication media.

First Round of a Controversy: Image of God

Weary at the futile efforts of men to perfect themselves and their society, Barth startled Protestantism during World War I by issuing a call, from the remoteness of his Swiss mountain church, for men to depend on God alone for deliverance. In his *Epistle to the Romans,* in numerous articles and essays, and in volume after volume of his massive "Dogmatics," Barth began reconstructing Protestant attitudes. Men are rescued from their sins entirely by God; their hope should be more transcendent and eschatological than earthly and temporal; they should return to the Reformation doctrine of "salvation by grace alone" —i.e., hear his Word—and cease the vain struggle at self-salvation.

Until about 1929, he was joined shoulder to shoulder in his labors by Emil Brunner, another Swiss theologian. At this point, however, Barth and Brunner began to diverge in their estimate of the way in which the communication of God's word takes place. So wary was Barth of the optimistic "liberal" theology on which he had been raised that he reverted with fierce resolve to a Reformation concept: in sinful man the image of God had been virtually destroyed. This meant, Barth contended, that man literally could do nothing in his own behalf. As sinners we cannot even say we are able to *hear* God when he speaks; God must create that ability in us, just as he must create faith in us.

In other words, Barth denied that there could be any point of contact already in man before God speaks to him. God creates his *own* point of contact.

Brunner's Attack on Barth

This statement of the new theological attitude was too extreme for Brunner.

The fact that "man is man," Brunner pointed out in an essay aimed at Barth, means that, even after the fall, there is still a point of contact in sinful man. Though man as sinner may have lost the *substance* of the image of God, and therefore is unable on his own not to sin, yet he has retained the formal pattern of the image of God in his human make-up. And this formal *imago Dei*, present in every man (including, of course, sinners and non-Christians), is the point of contact.

"The Word of God could not reach a man who had lost his consciousness of God entirely," Brunner argued. Unless man can hear God, unless he retains the capacity to be addressed by God, he cannot be held responsible for his unbelief. "Only a being that can be addressed is responsible, for it alone can make decisions." [1]

Thus in Brunner's view God does not have to create a point of contact in man, for man has never lost it. "It is the presupposition of his ability to hear the Word of God." This assumption does not make man any less a sinner, nor does it grant him any independent power to overcome his sins; for it is finally God's word itself and that alone which "creates man's ability to believe." [2]

What are the implications of Brunner's view for Christian communication? The existence of a point of contact refers to a relation between God and man, not one between proclaimer and outsider. Yet there is an analogy. We must be willing to look for ways of speaking about God in terms oriented toward the addressee. The writers of the New Testament, Brunner points out, used words "that were created by the religious consciousness of the pagans." Brunner clearly implies here that we must make a serious effort to communicate; we must not rely on any assumption that God will create the ability to hear no matter how obscure or strange the language we use.

Brunner sums up the communicative duty of the preacher in this way:

> *What* I should say to a man upon his death-bed is a holy matter; but it is a matter no less holy *how* I am to say it to him in such a way that he shall understand and appreciate it. A pastor might—to put it somewhat strongly—go to heaven on account of the What but go to hell on account of the How. To despise the question of the How is a sign, not of theological seriousness but of theological intellectualism.[3]

These arguments may remind us a good deal of our own American belief that "know-how" is the better half of truth, religious and otherwise. We should not, however, let this apparent resemblance deceive us. We cannot, in any sense, identify Brunner as an advocate of the efficacy of techniques or as an exponent of the possibilities for mass promotion of the gospel via the agencies of public communication. His arguments in favor of a point of contact and of being concerned with the "how" serve only to draw a contrast with the early Barth. Brunner would be as much opposed as Barth to some of our American applications of the point-of-contact theory as, e.g., in mass evangelism.

Despite his criticism of Barth, however, Brunner is well aware of one good reason for Barth's skepticism about the existence of a natural point of contact. Nineteenth-century theology in its apologetics, especially where it sought to defend the faith before the menace of advancing science, had seriously compromised the unique character of the gospel. The typical theological apologist of this period, in his attempt to deal with the claims of science and the growing cogency of some theories of evolution, had often surrendered the revealed, transcendent character of God's word. The Bible, e.g., was often conceded by the apologist to be no different in quality from the evidences of God's handiwork seen in nature or the test tube. And man's growing scientific capability was conceded, in the same way, to be but one more proof of man's natural endowments, diminishing accordingly his need for revealed knowledge.

Barth and his disciples resurrected Kierkegaard's earlier protest against the beginnings of this compromise movement. They argued that all apologetics can do is to transform Christianity from a bold faith of decision into an indifferent acceptance of objective evidence—which is to say, all it can do is to kill faith.

While agreeing that this estimate of apologetics was correct for nineteenth-century theology, Brunner would not agree that it constituted a sweeping and permanent condemnation of the attempt to make contact. "The fact that there is a false apologetic way of making contact does not mean that there is not a right way," he tartly reminded Barth.

Barth's "Angry Reply"

In an angry reply entitled "Nein!" Barth rejected practically all of Brunner's arguments. It was no news to Barth to learn from Brunner "the fact that man is man and not a cat." If man is a sinner, as the Scriptures and the Reformation teach, then Brunner cannot teach anything worth while about him—not even a formal pattern of the image of God, and certainly not a natural ability to hear God. The very fact that man is a sinner means that he can have, on his own, no openness or readiness to receive God's word. For man to talk about his ability to hear God is no more than another way he has of reminding himself, even as sinner, how important and self-sufficient he is. Brunner, with his talk of "capacity for revelation," sees man as a drowning person who somehow is able to help the lifeguard by swimming a few strokes. Brunner should stop to remember, Barth holds, that a drowning man is panic-stricken and utterly helpless—and so is man as sinner. "Freedom to know the true God is a miracle, a freedom of God, not one of our freedoms."

The notion of a point of contact then, of a "capacity" of man for God, says Barth, "has therefore to be dropped." If there is, nevertheless, an encounter between God and man, "then God himself must have created for it [the] conditions. . . . Where God acts, man has to be present *without* considering his own importance." Even if Brunner argues that the point of contact is only man's despair at his own situation, that still amounts to the worst form of pride, because it is *my* sorrow, *my* "little piece of despair." [4]

Barth goes on to reject Brunner's notion that as communicators of God's word we can even separate the questions of "what" and "how." Any preacher who is really captured by God's word, the "What," never thinks of seeking "the How outside the What." By this, Barth means that questions about techniques of communication, the right words to use, the point of contact, are all to be answered within the context of the divine message itself, but are beside the point if pursued as independent problems.

Christian communicators then take the road to misunderstanding of their calling when they seek a point of contact or a "capacity for revelation" in outsiders, according to Barth. The best way to deal with unbelievers and with youth, he says, is "to treat them quietly, simply (remembering that Christ has died and risen also for them), as if their rejection of 'Christianity' was not to be taken seriously." Only by this treatment can they see that you are speaking to them on the basis of faith alone.

> I have the impression that my sermons reach and 'interest' my audience most when I least rely on anything to 'correspond' to the Word of God already 'being there,' when I least rely on the 'possi-

> bility' of proclaiming this Word, when I least rely on my ability to 'reach' people by my rhetoric, when on the contrary I *allow* my language to be formed and shaped and adapted as much as possible by what the text seems to be saying.[5]

This exchange of views between Barth and Brunner was published in 1934 under the title *Natural Theology*. Since then Barth has modified his views considerably, as we shall see, especially on the meaning of the "image of God" reference in Gen. 1:26; yet his conception of the church's communicative task remains the same. He declares in the revised first half-volume of his "Dogmatics" that theology finds its true calling "not in exhibiting a 'point of connection' with the divine message to man, but purely in the divine message published and apprehended." If there is any valid apologetic, Barth holds, it is unintended. Communication of God's word comes not from special preparation or effort, but from trusting faith to do the only duty it knows: to oppose, or rather to *ignore*, unbelief. Even then, the preacher or communicator succeeds only as God himself witnesses to this faith.[6] All deliberate apologetic, Barth contends, is irrelevant, irresponsible, and ineffective.

In the first place, Barth argues, when faith takes unbelief seriously and actually enters into a discussion with it, it betrays itself and ceases to be faith. Second, theology, if it turns from its task within the church "to talk with other people about the matter," forgets its job of dogmatics. Finally, the very idea of apologetics (and, we might assume, communication) as a separate discipline suggests to Barth that theology proper—dogmatics—is thought of wrongly, is conceived as an esoteric undertaking oblivious to the menace on the outside and needing expert help in finding it an audience. Quoting from Luther to the effect that "the gospel needeth not our help," and that we should "preach the gospel ill," asking only for God's help, Barth concludes: "Apologetics and polemics can only be an *event*, they cannot be a *programme*."

Barth's Newer Views

In his more recent writings, Barth seems to move away from some of his earlier positions. Yet he remains steadfast in his refusal to enter the field of apologetics or to consider the outsider to faith as a communicative problem for theologians. Both his critics and his disciples were forced to modify some of their catch phrases about Barth when he completed Volume III, Part 1, of his "Dogmatics" in 1945 on *The Doctrine of Creation* (published in an English translation in 1958). Up to this point Barth was often referred to, because of his Christocentric approach to theology, as "a theologian with no doctrine of creation." Though he continues to insist that "the reality of creation is and can only be known with clarity and certainty in the person of Jesus Christ," nevertheless Barth calls for "a serious acceptance of God as Creator," and "what He finally and supremely created," i.e., man.[7] Accordingly, Barth now seeks to clarify his old position on the meaning of the "image of God" in man.

In the earlier argument with Brunner Barth had denied that fallen man any longer possessed a "capacity for revelation," a "point of contact," an ability to hear God's word—all of which Brunner had meant in defining "image of God" as man's "addressibility."

Barth's new position, surprisingly enough, is that fallen man has *not* lost the image of God, "either partially or completely, formally or materially." But this does not mean he now agrees with Brunner that the "ability to hear God's word" remains in sinful man. Far from it! The "image of God" Barth now defines strictly as God's creation of man in the form of "male and female" (Gen. 1:26). That relation is all the scripture says the image consists of, Barth argues, and it is a relation which has nothing to do at all with "the peculiar intellectual and moral talents and possibilities of man," nor with "his reason and its determination and exercise." In fact, the *imago Dei* is not a quality of man at all:

> Hence there is no point in asking in which of man's peculiar

> attributes and attitudes it consists. It does not consist in anything that man is or does. It consists as man himself consists as the creature of God. . . . The only thing that we are told about the creation of man, apart from the fact that it was accomplished by the Word of God in and after the image of God, is that "God created them male and female." [8]

Having advanced this new suggestion about the "content" of the image of God in man, Barth now seems to make a partial concession in the old argument about point of contact. Brunner had argued against Barth, we recall, that even apart from Christian faith, man's "image of God" consists of an ability to hear God, of a "capacity for words," of the capability of being addressed and of being responsible. Barth, in his new statement of the *imago Dei*, now says that man's differentiation as to sex makes him capable of fellowship—it gives him a creature's version of an "I-Thou" nature. It gives him "his nature as a Thou which can be *addressed* by God and an I which is *responsible* to Him"; thus the divine likeness in man consists of "his character as an I and Thou in the co-existence of man and man, of male and female." [9]

If the *imago Dei* gives man the capacity for fellowship, the character of an I and a Thou, the possibility of being "addressed" by God and of being "responsible" to him, is this not a fatal concession to Brunner's argument of 1934? Not in the end, because of Barth's sturdy assertion that

> all this, and therefore the divine likeness . . . does not in any sense belong to [man], but is his only because when He created him God willed to have mercy on him among all His creatures and to acknowledge him in this particular way.[10]

The image of God in man is neither lost nor forfeited by his status as a sinner, says Barth, since "what man does not possess he can neither bequeath nor forfeit." Because it is man's on loan only, the *imago Dei* still offers no basis for men to evince communicative capacities before God.

The upshot of Barth's latest remarks about the *imago Dei*, so far as the "point of contact" controversy goes, is this: Barth remains uninterested, as a theologian, in the subject. Indeed, he declares in the preface to this volume on creation that his task is to discuss the Hebrew creation stories or "sagas," as he terms them, but to say "nothing at all about apologetics and polemics." He explains:

> The relevant task of dogmatics at this point has been found exclusively in repeating the "saga," and I have found this task far finer and far more rewarding than all the dilettante entanglements in which I might otherwise have found myself.[11]

Throughout Barth's writings we find the recognition that revelation as written and proclaimed takes the form of human expression. This is ordinarily "the language of the Bible," and "a specifically Church language." At times he is even clear that confession must be translatable "into the speech of Mr. Everyman, the man and woman in the street," since away from church the language of pulpit and altar "is as effectual as Chinese." The problem is that Barth does not allow this latter insight much scope within his theological system, which for that reason is somewhat unhelpful on the matter of communication.[12]

We have already referred in Chapter I to one of Barth's recent tracts, *The Humanity of God*. There we noted his continued unwillingness to speak of the recipient of preaching as an outsider, because of God's "humanity." God's character of extending partnership promises the status of insider to all men. So we are not surprised to find that Barth goes on to counsel against the use of any kind of special language suited to the outsider.

He does, to be sure, concede very grudgingly that Christian communication might make use of something more or less resembling a point of connection through choice of language—*if* we insist on mediating God's word to them only by means of "harangue" (*Anrede*). In that case, "a little 'non-religious' street, newspaper, and philosophical talk . . . might well be suitable at times. It would become however, in no event, a subject of special care." He returns to an old theme: a little biblical language in our speech would also be a good thing, and would often be better understood by even the remotest strangers than if we tried to meet them halfway with some modern gibberish. Anyway—and this is a familiar Barthian axiom of communication—"what we have to say to them is already a strange novelty, in any case, as it is at first to us." Putting the strange message of the Bible into understandable terms would not help much—for it will still be a strange message. The witness to faith should not underestimate the message he has from God.

> Who has his heart truly with God—and so truly with men—ought to trust that the Word of God which he seeks to give signs of will not come back empty.[13]

Thus Barth continues to warn preachers and other communicators that concern for point of contact is not their business. He advises them once and for all to forget the temptation of looking for an "advance knowledge" of God in man; there is no capacity there to hear God's word by virtue of reason or other natural attribute. Searches for a communicative port of entry into the mind of natural man are useless and old-fashioned, and they are impious in that they credit man with qualities he does not possess but must always receive from God. The communicator is to *ignore* the fact that his listener is an unbeliever. He is not especially to seek common ground with him, for they already stand on common ground. This is not in virtue of the recipient's ability to hear the gospel as a man, as a communicating subject as it were, but rather because both have the "image of God," a gift which man does not control for himself.

Second Round: The Human Situation

Theology cannot be "thrown like a stone" Barth and others are warned by Paul Tillich. The communicator cannot simply "repeat biblical passages." Rather, he must make an attempt to pose his message as an answer to the crises of those who need it. In other words, theology cannot escape the problem of the human situation.[14] Tillich's "method of correlation," which he conceives as avoiding the dangers of both Barthianism and the unfortunate apologetics of the older liberal theology, presupposes that the Christian gospel offers an answer to the problems of despair, guilt, and suffering which characterize human beings in extremity, i.e., in need of God's help. The answers offered by the communicator, however, must be real answers—that is, the human beset by crisis must see in God's word an offer of help that applies precisely to his own troubles.

Difficulties with Barth's View

If we recall for a moment the main features of Barth's latest teaching about the *imago Dei* in man, we can understand why theologians like Tillich have found it necessary to push the discussion into a new stage concerned directly with the human situation. It will be recalled that Barth concedes—or, rather, insists—that man has God's likeness in virtue of the fact that he is created male and female. In this sense man is confrontable, a being capable of fellowship. His being as male and female is a kind of likeness or copy of the relation God intends between himself and man. God is an "I and a Thou" in his own being; he wants this kind of relation between himself and man, and between man and man; and there is a "reflection" of all this "in the relationship between male and female, in human existence itself." So the image of God is no capacity for reason or anything else belonging to man, as past theologians have supposed. Further, it has not been lost by man, since he never possessed it in the first place. The *imago Dei* is strictly a gift of God rather than the private property of man who bears it.

Barth's description of man, however, is valid only as an ideal, only as a statement about what man is like when he has lived up to what God intends of him. In the meantime men do not copy God in their fellowship. If man's being as male and female is supposed to be a likeness of God's intended partnership with man, then the public image of sex life of our society is a description of the way in which this likeness has been corrupted. Barth assumes that the *imago Dei,* just because man has it from God, cannot be abused; what he does not consider is that often the beneficiary of a relationship is the one who takes the least care of it. Thus the Barthian teaching on the *imago Dei* really asks the Christian communicator to take his eyes off the problem at hand—the human situation—and to think only of God's intentions for man.

What are the consequences if the communicator of the word of God accepts Barth's view without really understanding it? First, he is tempted to address all of his listeners as if they were alike, as if no effort need be made to distinguish among men on the basis of their previous backgrounds, interests, peculiar ways of understanding life, and especially their particular forms of need and sin.

Second, this view taken carelessly encourages the communicator not to think of communication as something *he* enters into. If the *imago Dei* is a relation sponsored for man by God, so is the business of worrying about a point of contact—and the communicator is tempted to drop out as a principal in the encounter. If the *imago Dei* is viewed as hermetically sealed, then the recipient is confrontable by God alone, and not by his fellows—and this outcome is a denial of Barth's original intention in outlining his teaching on this subject. It is also a cancellation of the second great commandment—that man shall love, and therefore enter into communication with, his neighbor.

Finally, we must attempt to translate the difficulties of the Barthian *imago Dei* into the categories of proclamation which we have adopted. Let us ask specifically how well Barth's theology is suited to the task of addressing the outsider to faith. Barth wants to take every man as his partner in the service of God—this is the meaning of his insistence that "the best way of dealing with 'unbelievers' . . . is . . . to treat them quietly, simply (remembering that Christ has died and risen also for them), as if their rejection of 'Christianity' was not to be taken seriously." [15] It is also the meaning of his more recent argument that the image of God is man's creation as male and female. But does he recognize the *actual* situation, the *actual* beliefs, the *actual* language, the *actual* problems, the *actual* false gods of the erstwhile partners? When one does not treat his partner as a concrete individual, dealing with him where he is, one does not treat him as a partner. One does not even see him. We are in need, then, of a theory of Christian communication which is much more sensitive to the actualities of the human situation.

Tillich's Apologetic Theology

The utterance of the preacher or any Christian communicator must, on Tillich's principles, be adapted to the problem at hand. It must be *formed* by the human situation (even though Tillich speaks of it as a revelatory answer). "In order to answer a question," says Tillich, "one must have something in common with the person who asks it." Theological answers must then be shaped to correspond to a situation compounded of "disruption, conflict, self-destruction, meaninglessness, and despair." [16] He holds that theology which does not penetrate to these depths does not go far enough toward helping the very men who are most in need of God's word; and it does not help them at the very places and times when they are most in need of it.

Tillich's writings, some of which came into print nearly a quarter of a century after the Barth-Brunner debate over the point of contact in the 1930's, denote a new stage or round of the argument. Tillich in effect bypasses the old discussions about the meaning of the *imago Dei* and focuses the issue on the "human situation" as such, pleading as he does with the present-day theological world to "take seriously the attempt . . . to answer the questions put before it by the contemporary situation."

In recent writings, Tillich makes a stronger plea than ever for the crucial importance of the "boundary situation." The revelatory answer is meaningless if there is no question to which it is the answer. Here he shows his affinity for the best conceptions drawn from anthropology and the social sciences as ways of penetrating accurately to the situation of man. This remark corresponds, for example, to the thesis of the semanticist that in the meaningful use of language it is a cardinal rule that the *terminology of the question determines the terminology of the answer;* we cannot get a clear answer to a vague question. Tillich does not suggest, of course, that the gospel can be made "clear" in any scientific sense or "easy" in any recreational sense. His point, rather, is that *man* is always the question which needs an answer; that is, "man himself in the conflicts of his existential situation." The question asked by man "is man himself." In asking it "he is alone with himself." He asks "out of the depth" and this depth "is he himself." [17]

Tillich has often applied this theological interest in the human situation directly to the problem of addressing outsiders. In lectures on historical theology, he has proposed the following three principles as keys to the work of the second-century Christian apologists—Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and others:

1. They first found a mutually accepted criterion, a common basis, a meeting place in thought accessible both to Christians and pagans.
2. They went on from there to demonstrate defects in the content of pagan thought.
3. Finally, they proclaimed Christianity as the meaningful fulfillment of the longing and desire of the pagan systems—as the answer, in other words, to the question posed by the human situation.

The Christian answer, on these principles, may not be proclaimed unless the communicator begins on common ground, on the truth (and the human need) that is mutually agreed upon between the two systems. Tillich has discussed his view on this matter in several places, most explicitly in the introductions of the first two volumes of his *Systematic Theology* and in *The Interpretation of History.*[18] In all of them he says essentially the same thing: "Apologetics presupposes common ground, however vague it may be," and all theology of any consequence since the eighteenth century, save fundamentalism, has had its apologetic aspect. But always this "common ground" is a function of the pagan's existential situation. Apologetic theology takes so seriously the situation of the pagan that it is willing to drop the special language of theology if it has to.

"In order to communicate the Gospel we must show its existential significance," Tillich declares in a paper on communicating the Christian message today. "That means its significance for the center of our human personal life." How can we accomplish this task? he asks. Not, on the one hand, by "continuing to throw doctrines like stones on the heads of people as answers which are no answer to their question"; nor, on the other hand, by going to the opposite extreme of wanting to "advertise Jesus, as some churches do, like one advertises a new brand of toothpaste." At the very least, however, we must try to show "that the Christian message is an answer to the questions implied in the very existence of man." [19]

In the celebrated controversy with Brunner, Barth had already rejected the thesis that the human situation could be the basis of finding a point of contact for communication of the Christian message. It is a kind of self-salvation, a pretense by man that he can judge his own need of God's help and even decide on the time and place.

Tillich's revival of this interest in the human situation is opposed vigorously, as we might expect, by the followers of Barth. We may follow briefly the criticism of Tillich made by one of them, Arthur Cochrane. Tillich is simply not interested in the revelation of the Christian faith, says Cochrane, nor does he require the Jesus Christ of this faith for his system. Because of his efforts to strike common ground with the nonbeliever, Tillich gives up for his theology any unique norm and center in scripture. Furthermore, when a theologian pauses to study the human situation, he loses his claim to be a proclaimer of the word. "For man is not able to ask the right questions, nor does the 'situation' yield these questions." Jesus Christ, Cochrane argues, "is not the answer to man's self-discovered and self-formulated questions. He reveals himself as God's question and answer to man. He exposes man's need and meets it." There is no call to ask what the need is for *our* age—or for any other age; Tillich is wrong in finding various new ways of putting the existential plight of contemporary man. For in the Apostle's Creed is found the eternally valid description of the human situation. Man's need now and in every age is "the forgiveness of sins." [20]

An Impasse

To satisfy ourselves that Barth and his followers make a powerful point with this criticism, we have only to examine the social science of our generation. We find this science captivated by the idea that it must describe the needs of man; but that does not necessarily relieve the social scientist of his overconfidence in science or of his conviction that man himself can heal the broken human situation. Indeed, attention to the seamy side of human affairs only spurs some social scientists all the more to develop prescriptions for self-salvation.

In the admirable work of Elton Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, for example, we encounter a hard-headed evaluation of the fallacy of inevitable progress. Mayo begins with a pessimism about our industrial ambitions that would do credit to Reinhold Niebuhr himself. And as with Barth, the experience of war apparently evoked his protest:

> Man inspired by small success to wanton presumption—[*hubris*]—has called down upon himself the wrath of the gods. His fine intentions, his grandiose plans, have in thirty years been reduced to chaos; his magnificent buildings, to dust and rubble. And man himself has done it; by way of those advances in science that were to give him perfection, he has achieved mainly destruction, desolation, misery.[21]

As we read on, however, we discover that Mayo has not drawn from this sober appraisal of the situation exactly the conclusion that theological observers might wish of him. It soon becomes apparent that Mayo does not think of the plight of man as residing in anything resembling original sin. True, men are notoriously hostile and wary of one another; they are stubborn and do not co-operate as they should in our complex industrial society. But there is nothing inborn or inevitable about this failure to cooperate and adapt. What we need to do is adopt the spirit of the scientific method, which has worked so well in gaining control over nature, and apply it to the human situation. "If our social skills (that is, our ability to secure cooperation between people) had advanced step by step with our technical skills," Mayo observes, "there would not have been another European war." He goes on: "The achievements of physical science, of chemistry, of medicine, in the last century have been very great; but the very dimension of these achievements has thrown society out of balance."[22] Our work is cut out for us. It is now up to sociology and psychology to catch up by raising their own "lowly and pedestrian skills" to the level of the high and successful precedents set for them by science.

Tillich is concerned to warn against this and other attempts common to instrumental philosophy, depth psychology, and other human sciences to treat the situation itself as if it contained *more* than the question. "The existential question, namely, man himself in the conflicts of his existential situation, is not the source for the revelatory answer formulated by theology." Rather, this source is in the word of God—or, to use two favorite expressions of Tillich's, it is in "Jesus as the Christ" through whom we are offered "The New Being." But it is always a Word which answers to our need of a word, and it is a Being which answers to our special predicament of existing between being and nonbeing.

We seem to be at an impasse. Theology is meaningless, Tillich declares, unless it is proclaimed on the basis of common ground which takes the unbeliever's views—and needs—seriously. Theology strays wide of its calling, says Cochrane, when it is proclaimed on the basis of man's self-made point of contact and self-discovered need.

Solution: Contact and Conflict

The criticisms of Tillich's "situational theology" which we have just noticed are respectable and serious. They warn us rightly that the human situation is not an independent factor with self-evident, automatic importance for the meaning of life. Barth and his followers do not intend to rule out the importance of the human situation, even though that is often the result of their theology. Indeed, the Barthian dogmatics used to be called "crisis" theology precisely because Barth was so fond of pointing out, at one stage of his career, that God's word comes home to man in his existence, his desperate situation. But the human crisis, after all, is to Barth only the occasion on which God creates his own point of contact with man and convicts him of his needs—and that limitation on the meaning of the situation puts us back just where we were with Barth's teaching on the image of God. It leaves us without theological help for our communication task. So if we must part company with Tillich, it cannot be to return to Barth.

The communicator of the Christian message who takes both Tillich and Barth seriously must undoubtedly end up in somewhat the same dilemma in which John Wesley felt himself. On the one hand, Wesley wanted to avoid a doctrine of "salvation by works"—that was his "Barthian" side. The obvious alternative, however, was to leap into the arms of the predestinarians and embrace their doctrine of "salvation by absolute decrees"—that was his "Tillichian" side. There are corresponding dangers for the Christian communicator in the communication problem we have just described. One is to seek the outsider by "works"—by laboring to establish a point of contact in the human situation and to promote God's word for him, as it were. This is a sure way of insisting that the divine message has no power of its own. The other false course is to do nothing, especially about the outsider, refusing to see in him or his situation a unique problem demanding our most energetic witness and assistance. It is a good thing to believe in the helplessness of man before God and in his inability to talk himself into faith. But it is another (and inexcusable) thing to wash our hands of his helplessness by refusing to start with his unbelief. That is to stand about, presuming somewhat irresponsibly that he will somehow be "elected" to the Christian faith without the help of being confronted, really, by his fellow Christian men.

Bultmann's Proposal

What we need, then, is the right way of talking about the "point of contact." Whether it is located in the *imago Dei* or in the desperation of the human predicament, this common ground ought to be taken by Christian communicators with all the seriousness which Tillich urges. And yet at the same time the point of contact cannot be inflated into a built-in life preserver which every man is supposed to have attached to his soul by nature. If that were the case (and here Barth is right) no one would require God's help in the first place.

A possible resolution of the dilemma is suggested by Rudolf Bultmann in an essay, "Points of Contact and Conflict."[23] The Christian gospel and unbelief *do* conflict, says Bultmann: grace is ever a contradiction to sin. At the same time conflict itself is unthinkable unless there is some relation between the parties. So there is a point of contact between the Christian message and the outsider to faith. This connection does not lie in any ability of the human being to understand God without God's help; nor does it lie in any positive common denominator between the word of God and the unbeliefs of man. *The point of contact is man's sin itself.* Any man, insider or outsider, who has really been confronted by God has had to come into conflict with him; but since God's word is always aimed at changing man, it must first be understandable to him—understandable as a *conflict,* to be sure, but still not something that is incomprehensible.

Since man's sin expresses itself in his whole existence—

especially in his language, his religion, his ethics, his philosophy, his notions about God—all of these forms of his existence become points of contact. We must remember, however, that they are points of contact because they are modes of man's existence which need to be touched by God's word and not because they somehow express a bit of God's word already. Thus the common ground or point of contact which we may uncover in the modern outsider to faith will not be an area of his existence which he feels is somehow already partly Christian, but it will be rather his whole existence which conspicuously stands in need—just as ours does—of God's transforming grace.

Bultmann comes out resolutely in favor of the effort to locate a point of contact, if it offers the feature of conflict, and he furthermore proposes energetic communication by way of this point of connection. He calls for the preacher to strive to see the recipient of his human words—which may bear God's word—as a human existence in "concrete historical form." Every recipient, moreover, may be different from all others, since in each of us "the conflict with God and the question of man's real being are differently expressed."

> It is senseless to preach the Word of God in the same form everywhere. Just as it must be preached to peoples speaking foreign tongues in their own language, so it must in any case be translated into the language understandable at any given time to man—and basically to every individual man. . . . We are men, and we have to inquire conscientiously and with an awareness of our responsibility into the possibilities which give scope for our work. We do not only have to envisage the point of contact in that paradoxical sense, we have also to inquire about the point of contact for our message in the most simple sense.[24]

Let us recall the case of Father Borelli and his effort to win over the *scugnizzi* of Naples (introduction to this chapter). By dressing himself as a vagrant and thus establishing a point of contact with the urchins of Naples, Father Borelli did not thereby concede some degree of "truth" in the way of life lived by the *scugnizzi*. Their life, in fact, was the opposite of what the priest sought for them. Here we become aware of the great temptation lying in wait for all apologetic theology which accepts "common ground" or "the point of contact" at face value. As Tillich himself has observed: no matter how willing the theologian may be to meet the pagan on common ground, still his theology must be "based on the kerygma as the substance and criterion of each of its statements." [25] Barth is thus right to warn us against endorsing unbelief. Yet on Barth's principles no special effort to locate a point of contact should ever be made. Bultmann's principles, however, allow for a point of contact that is actually a point of conflict. Indeed, if we reflect on Father Borelli's adventure with the Neapolitan juvenile delinquents, we can recognize that it is the delinquency of these young men that was at once the form of their unbelief and the "common ground" between them and the priest. Before any common ground could be established the priest had to step, as it were, beyond the circle of belief, leaving the formal symbols used by the church to proclaim belief (i. e., his priestly robes) behind him.

Summary

On the basis of our study of contemporary theologians thus far we may now summarize the problem of reaching the outsider:

1. The proclaimer of the church's message is under obligation to seek a point of contact with the outsider—but one of a very special kind.
2. This point of contact is not to be found in any virtues or abilities or capacities of the outsider, except as they exhibit sin.
3. It is thus to be found in the outsider's previous *failure to hear the gospel*, for the point of contact is always a "point of conflict" with God.
4. Nevertheless, this point of contact-conflict will be found only when the communicator seeks to know the recipient in his individual situation. Since this situation includes a "pre-

vious failure to hear the gospel," the proclaimer will use the language of this previous state of the recipient.

5. To take advantage of this point of conflict, then, the communicator will always have to step beyond the circle of the insider, drop the language or symbols of believers—at least in part—and communicate with the outsider as a true partner, using the language or symbols to which the partner is accustomed.

At this point a word of warning is in order. We must remind ourselves once more that in most situations of Christian communication today, there are no pure insiders or outsiders to faith. As we saw in Chapter I, the believer of today, because of the unfocused nature of our industrial society, is partly an outsider to faith, holding many purely secular loyalties. And the unchurched outsider is partly a "doer of the Word," since Christian values have shaped in countless ways the interests of our society.

No matter which of these recipients the communicator addresses, no matter which language he uses (sacred or secular), his ultimate goal will always be the same: to secure or deepen commitment, to increase faith. Though the audience may determine the style of communication and may supply many of the symbols, the message itself will have to come from God.

NOTES

1. H. Emil Brunner, "Nature and Grace," published in English along with Barth's reply, "NO!" as *Natural Theology*, tr. Peter Fraenkel (London: Centenary Press, 1946), p. 31. The original discussion was published as *Natur und Gnade, zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 104, 120.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
6. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, tr. G. T. Thomson

("Church Dogmatics," Vol. I, 1 [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936]), pp. 30-31.

7. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of Creation*, tr. J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey, Harold Knight ("Church Dogmatics," Vol. III, 1 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958]), pp. 28, 32, 217.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 184-85.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 199. Italics mine.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 199, 200.
11. *Ibid.*, ix-x.
12. The quotations are from Barth's *Dogmatics in Outline*, tr. G. T. Thomson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), pp. 31-33. Barth rarely allows his awareness that church language is like Chinese to "Mr. Everyman" to sway him in his opposition to seeking points of contact. See his whole subsection, "Vestigium Trinitatis," *The Doctrine of the Word of God, op. cit.*, pp. 383-99. Revelation may be "interpreted" but not "illustrated" (p. 396). It is "non-obligatory, uncommissioned, and perilous" to use words that are "at a distance from the vocabulary of Scripture" (pp. 396-97). Where the church "does not venture to confess in its own language, it usually does not confess at all" (*Dogmatics in Outline, op. cit.*, p. 31).
13. Barth, *The Humanity of God, op. cit.*, p. 59.
14. Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951, 1955), I, 7. Copyright 1951 by the University of Chicago.
15. *Natural Theology, op. cit.*, p. 127.
16. Tillich, *op. cit.*, II, 15; I, 6; I, 49.
17. Tillich, *op. cit.*, II, 13.
18. *Ibid.*, I, 6-8; II, 13-16. *The Interpretation of History*, tr. N. A. Rasetzki and Elsa E. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 42-48.
19. "Communicating the Christian Message Today," mimeographed copy.
20. Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Existentialists and God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 97.
21. Elton Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization* (Boston: Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1945), p. 3.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
23. Rudolf Bultmann, *Essays: Philosophical and Theological*, tr. James C. G. Greig (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1955), pp. 133-50. By permission of the publishers, SCM Press, Ltd., and The Macmillan Co.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-38.
25. Tillich, *Systematic Theology, op. cit.*, I, 7.

CHAPTER III

HOW SECOND-CENTURY CHRISTIANS APPROACHED THE OUTSIDER

So far, we may say, we have made two important discoveries. The first (Chapter I) is that our society and even our local congregations are full of individuals whom we may fairly term outsiders to the church of one kind or another. The second (Chapter II) is that (though theologians warn us of the dangers) the church must try to capture the attention of these individuals and speak to them. It can do so only if it is willing to look on them as *outsiders*. This is accomplished through seeking a point of contact which manages to convince the outsider of one overriding fact: that his fondest beliefs as an outsider are actually *in conflict* with the Christian message.

Up to here we know the second discovery only in the form of a theory. How does it work out in practice? How do you look for a point of contact that is also a point of conflict? We will do well to begin with a series of good examples. No Christians in history were more successful at actually putting this theory into practice among outsiders than those of the second and third centuries. Before we try to put it into practice for our own day, then, let us examine the communicative work of some of the early followers of the way.

Some years before A.D. 256 Christians built a church at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates River. The church has been unearthed in relatively good condition, and we can learn much from it about the worship life and even the theological presuppositions of its people. Especially are the paintings on the walls an invaluable guide for us.

In an analysis of the symbolism at Dura-Europos, Cyril C.

Richardson points out how often Christian artists of these days elected to employ pagan myth and forms in their attempts to convey distinctly Christian motifs. On one wall of the baptistry is a picture of Christ as the Good Shepherd. Now this was not simply a biblical image. Rather, pagan statues of Orpheus Boukolos (The Herdsman) or Hermes Kriophoros (Ram-bearer) stimulated the imagination of the artist and furnished a direct model for the representation of Christ.

"We should not be astonished at the readiness of Christian artists to employ pagan forms as models," Richardson says.[1] They thought with these forms—and when they wished to express the new and different message of Christianity, they could do so only by taking over the familiar old motifs and giving them new meaning.

Richardson goes on to talk of the same artistic phenomenon in the Roman catacombs. The fish which swallowed Jonah is the dragon of Andromeda, and Jonah reclining beneath his gourd is Endymion. "We even find Christ directly pictured as Orpheus (lyre, cap, and all) charming wild beasts," a collection of pagan symbols intended to convey the substance of Isa. 11:1-6, says Richardson.

> In all these instances the point is not that Christianity was syncretic in blending paganism with itself, but that, quite careless of form, it used the pagan models to express a new meaning; just as it utilized pagan ideas to suggest a message which was essentially different.[2]

We cannot identify Christ and Orpheus, then, on the strength of this symbolism, nor can we tax the early Christians with the error. They were well aware that these two saviors of souls were very different from each other in the *ways* that they were saviors. Here we see in practice what we have been discussing so far only as a theory—the use of a point of contact which expresses a new meaning from the Christian point of view and is therefore also a point of conflict. Our task in this chapter is to examine in a systematic way this mode of reaching the outsider as it has actually been practiced. And the subject matter of our examination will be the frontier of the church in the second century, when the outsiders consisted of genuine, unchristianized pagans. (By contrast the audience of the sixteenth-century reformers consisted, not of unchristianized outsiders, but rather of wrongly Christianized *insiders* whose lives were dominated from birth by the church. That is why we must choose apologists like Justin Martyr, rather than reformers like Luther and Calvin, as the subjects of this chapter.)

"Point of Contact" in the Second Century

For the second-century church, the apology was a special mode of preaching, of proclaiming the Christian faith. It differed from ordinary preaching not only in the fact that it was written instead of oral communication, but also in that it was aimed at an audience *beyond the church.*

To be sure, most of the apologies were not written as regular pieces of proclamation. Instead they were issued on the occasion of specific charges or attacks aimed at Christian faith, and as replies to them. For example, Tertullian takes up his pen for apologetic purposes in response to Roman charges that Christians eat babies, practice sexual immorality, and are "atheists." But invariably the response from spokesmen like Tertullian and Justin is far more than the refutation of specific charges. An apology to them was nothing less than a method of witnessing to the gospel with external audiences and situations in mind.

Because it was aimed at the outsider, the second-century apology manifested one other striking divergence from the sermon: it made deliberate use of the thought-forms, symbols, and language of the outsider. It was not, like the sermon, couched in the idiom of the already convinced.

Now we are ready to examine the second century's apologetic methods, always with the view of applying what we learn to our twentieth-century problem of reaching the outsider. Our problem, though, is more complicated. Our outsiders are not out-and-out pagans but rather are semi-Christianized. Our apologetics must take into account the advantages and dangers of the mass media. Still, second-century practice, we may be sure, will afford guidance.

The apologetic writings of Justin Martyr and Tertullian abound with attempts to make contact with Greek and Latin thought. (I realize that Tertullian is usually thought of as a stern promoter of the discontinuity between Christian faith and pagan-heretic thought. In this chapter, however, I am referring solely to his apologetic tracts and not to the quite different writings in which he warns the people of Carthage and other Christians against worldly wisdom.)

Neither apologist is interested in making contact simply to find something acceptable about the pagan religions. Rather, the object is quite the opposite. The point of contact is the very point—indeed, the only point—at which Christianity's gospel and paganism's unbelief come into conflict. Justin seeks both "the contrast and the connection" between divine revelation and human knowledge. He is quite clear that even the dark and broken knowledge of the pagans is theirs, not by their own abilities, but by their share "in the divine generative Logos" (*Apology* II. 13). We can make something of the same assertion for Tertullian—though he above all, as we shall see, is not quite the "primitive Barth" that some of his publicists among contemporary theologians have imagined him to be. As a matter of fact, Tertullian is far more careless in his use of the point of contact than is Justin.

We may best unfold these matters, however, by examining the methods of these two second-century "proclaimers to the outside." We will find it especially interesting to inquire into their use of philosophy, certain ancient psychological theories, and the Scriptures.

Philosophy

Justin obviously regarded the philosophy of the Greeks as a suitable tool for his preaching, as a pool of symbols known to his hearers from which he could extract whatever he needed. The "seeds of truth" have already been given to the philosophers by God (*Apology* I. 44; *Apology* II. 8). Their ideas contain some shadow of truth because God's Word, the Logos, before it was fully revealed in Jesus Christ, was partially revealed to these and all men. Thus the Greeks have some claim to divine knowledge "by means of the engrafted seed of the Word which was implanted in them" (*Apology* II. 13). To the few men before Christ who have discerned the reality of this Word, Justin even goes so far as to give the name "Christians." Men like Abraham and Socrates, for example, lived according to the Logos (or according to *reason*, as we might translate) and so deserve to be ranked with the present-day followers of this same Logos now revealed in the flesh. (*Apology* I. 46.)

Yet Justin does not fall into the waiting trap and conclude that Greek philosophy, because of this common ground, is at least a halfway Christianity. The point of contact is a point of *conflict*. He singles out Abraham and Socrates as "Christians before Christ" only because they are *exceptions* to the generality of men, because they saw truth where others refused to. For Greek philosophers in general, Justin has exactly the opposite judgment: their half-truths led, not to knowledge, but to error. "Since they did not have a full knowledge of the Logos, which is Christ, they often contradicted themselves." (*Apology* I. 44; *Apology* II. 10.) The teachings of Christ are not the same as human wisdom and have no resemblance at all to the doctrines of certain popular schools of thought among the Greeks. (*Apology* II. 15.) The majority of Greek philosophers know just enough about God to convict themselves of failure to know him: although they constantly propose questions about God, they do not propose the right ones. Most have not even inquired whether there is only one god "and whether or not a divine providence takes care of us" (*Dialogue* 1).

Justin then quotes philosophy, not to show that philosophy is Christian (or that Christianity is philosophical), but rather to communicate with his hearers in their own peculiar symbols.

Whatever the philosophers can claim to know of reason and the rational principle inherent in the universe and man, it does not become full knowledge until it is given meaning and significance by Christ. Giovanni Miegge, the Italian theologian, writes that to Justin Christ is the key to the problem of life.

> Christ is the totality of truth, in whom it is possible to recognize the value and the harmony of all those fragments of truth, of all those aspects of beauty and goods, which are found in the civilizations of the ancient world, but there scattered, in mutual contradiction, without any necessary relationship to one another or to a necessarily existing and all-inclusive truth.[3]

The Christian teachings, that is, are alone true. (*Apology* I. 23.) The prophets alone knew the truth and communicated it to men. (*Dialogue* 7.) These same teachings, to be sure, have made contact with the Greeks in a preliminary form. But their preliminary and faithless knowledge now stands naked for what it is: a contrast with the saving truth offered and guaranteed in the person of Jesus the Word. "The seed of something and its imitation, given in proportion to one's capacity, is one thing, but the thing itself, which is shared and imitated according to His grace, is quite another." (*Apology* II. 13.)

Both in his use and criticism of philosophy, Tertullian (so far as his apologetic writings go, and not counting his tracts against the heretics within the church) reminds us of Justin. In fact he is dependent on the earlier apologist for many of his apologetical ideas. Against any kind of sophisticated argument, Tertullian is swifter to judge than Justin and harsher in his verdict. Yet he often takes Justin's attitude as a starting point. For example, he follows Justin in demanding equal treatment of Christians and philosophers before the law, since the two groups are supposed to have something in common. (*Apology* 46; cf. Justin *Apology* I. 20.)

Because of a quirk of history, Justin has almost unanimously been regarded among theologians as less responsible than Tertullian in his "liberal attitude to pagan thought," and Tertullian has been billed as a man who "would resist to the uttermost any attempt to contaminate the faith by association with pagan thought." [4] Most estimates of Tertullian—Harnack's is a conspicuous exception—are based too largely on his dogmatic or moral writings intended for wrong believers, the ordinary laity, and others *within* the church. When we scrutinize Tertullian's *apologetic* writings, in which he was attempting to win newcomers for the faith, we do not find his iron resolution against pagan thought to be nearly so evident.

These apologetic writings of Tertullian reveal he is Justin Martyr's superior at using pagan philosophical concepts to make his point of contact. Whereas Justin is often clumsy and superficial, Tertullian can be persuasive and charming. For example, Tertullian prefaces an explanation of the Trinity for outsiders with a friendly and flattering description of the teachings of Zeno and Cleanthes, the Stoics. He begins with their view of the Logos or divine Word as Spirit. (*Apology* 21. 10.) "We, too," he says, proceeding to add onto this little philosophical bay window a large edifice of Christian doctrine, "ascribe Spirit as its proper substance to that Word, Reason, and Power by which, as we have said, God made everything" (*Apology* 21. 11). From there he is off into his own ideas on the subject. Tertullian's development of this point closely follows Justin's. To describe the nature of the Son, he retains even the "light from light" metaphor (cf. Justin *Dialogue* 128, 61), which indeed goes beyond Justin in its original form back to Philo.

Basically (as an apologist) Tertullian holds the same concept about the status of philosophy as Justin—that is, that it can claim some semblance to truth because it has the indwelling Logos, but that the fulfillment of truth comes only with Christ in the flesh. Instead of Justin's "seed of the Word" and "the whole Word," Tertullian speaks of the "mere wisdom" of the philosophers which is to be contrasted with the "prime wisdom" of Christian truth. (*To the Nations* I. 3; II. 2; cf. Justin's references to "the seed of the Logos" and "the whole Logos," *Apology* I. 44; *Apology* II. 10, etc.) Like Justin, Tertullian regards this point of contact in philosophy also as a point of contrast or conflict; it is the damning evidence *against* the philosophers in their present state of knowledge. Socrates represented the truth in old times and was hated for it. (*Apology* 14. 7.) Plato's theology represents an "enlightened view" compared with the "harsh opinion of Epicurus." (*To the Nations* II. 3.) Tertullian brings up these exceptions for the same reason Justin does: to show how truth is exceptional in the philosophical world—being found only where its possessor has been granted it by God.

Strangely, Tertullian is both harsher and less critical than Justin in pointing up the conflict between philosophy and Christianity. God can never be known by "uncertain speculations," "worthless fables," or "promiscuous conceits." (*To the Nations* II. 1.) Philosophical literature is "perverted" and full of errors. (*On the Testimony of the Soul* 1; cf. Justin *Apology*, II, 13.) He is bitter and abusive of speculative philosophy and the arguments among the sophisticated thinkers of paganism. (*To the Nations* II. 2.)

Justin does not vent his rage against the philosophers in this way; yet Tertullian for all his anger at philosophy, finally rejects it not for theological but for practical reasons. The philosophers are to be turned away not because they fail to "knock at the gates of truth," but because when they do so, no one listens to them. (*On the Testimony of the Soul* 1.) It is not the philosophical nature of the pagan writings that makes them dangerous to faith; it is rather their lack of simplicity and clarity. The most believable pagan writings are also likely to be the plainest and most unpretentious. (*To the Nations* II. 5, 12.) Tertullian, in short, is almost in the position of arguing that philosophy is wrong, not because it is unchristian, but because it is complicated. This concession blunts the edge of the point of conflict, despite his harangues at the pagans. And so Tertullian is perhaps not quite so sound an apologist as Justin Martyr, who condemns the pagan teachings on one ground alone: for all their seedlike resemblance, they are not the same as Christ's (*Apology* II. 13.)

Natural Perception

If Tertullian burns the bridge of speculative philosophy behind him, it is because he has discovered a more attractive point of contact of another sort. This alternative vehicle of truth is his theory of the *implanted perceptive ability of the soul,* a doctrine which he draws from the Stoic philosophers of his time. According to this theory, as Tertullian uses it, the soul can perceive God by its very nature; no special equipment such as an implanted "seed of the Logos" is called for. Though Tertullian would not dispute the divine origin of this soul, still he appears to veer away from too much reliance on special revelation. To recur to the phrase which Barth and Brunner argued about in the 1930's Tertullian, in his psychology, appears to assert a natural "capacity for revelation."

Tertullian views the appeal to natural perception as an instrument for reaching pagans superior to scripture itself. For no one comes to the Scriptures, Tertullian decides, "unless he is already a Christian" (*Testimony of the Soul* 1). "The soul was prior to letters; speech, prior to books; ideas, prior to setting them down in writing; and man himself, prior to the philosopher and poet." (*Ibid.* 5.) He urges non-Christians not to heed scriptures directly, therefore, but rather to think of God *as they think of other matters,* using "that natural principle which prompts you to a wise judgment in all other cases" (*To the Nations* II. 5).

It is true that human error—especially the devious, sophisticated results of philosophical effort—have corrupted human knowledge. Thus the soul is not always under the best influence for learning truth. Nevertheless, it is always able to *name* God. Despite being led astray by the false gods of the pagan world, despite its imprisonment in a body of lusting flesh, it can leap away from its sickness and still speak of God *in the singular.* (*Apology* 17. 5.) This natural inclination of men to monotheism (and thus to Christianity) is seen every day in the general use of such phrases as "Great God," "Good God," and "God grant." Tertullian asserts the human "capacity for revelation" with a vengeance: "O testimony of the soul, which is by natural instinct Christian!" (*Apology* 17. 6). Nature, he declares, is just as competent a teacher as scripture. (*Testimony of the Soul* 5.) In such expressions as this, Tertullian departs widely from Justin's leading principle, that the Word in the person of Christ is the teacher, and thus the condemner of pagan learning. It is not surprising that Harnack comments of Tertullian's apologies that in them the revealed character of Christianity is given up.[5] In his enthusiasm for seeking common ground Tertullian does not always appear to remember that the point of contact is principally a point of conflict.

All of Justin's doubts about the final value of human philosophy apply equally to natural perception, since he imagines philosophy and common sense to depend for their worth finally on the same thing, the extent to which they reflect "the Logos who is in every person" (*Apology* II. 10). Genuine wisdom is the possession of "workmen and men wholly uneducated" as well as philosophers, because wisdom in Justin's sense means "Christ" rather than human intellectual ability. (*Apology* II. 10.) It is entirely reasonable to Justin that "twelve illiterate men" (the apostles) have been able to teach all nations and, what is more, to inspire men to meet death cheerfully, confessing Christ. (*Apology* I. 39.) Whatever truth men have is the result, not of human wisdom, but of the power of God. That is why, he says to the Greeks, "you can hear and learn . . . from persons among us who do not even know the letters of the alphabet, who are uncultured and rude in speech, but wise and believing in mind" (*Apology* I. 60).

Scripture

Both apologists, as we have seen, intend to accept the *forms* or *symbols* of the pagan world while at the same time rejecting the *content* of these forms wherever they do not agree with

Christian teachings. Tertullian actually does not fit this pattern as well as Justin, since he seems to be more interested in communication for its own sake than an apologist can safely be; thus he often comes out repudiating the *symbols* of ancient philosophy but accepting as central "content" one of the Stoic world's leading ideas, natural perception. This becomes to him "the testimony of the naturally Christian soul," but it seems to us no more than ordinary non-Christian common sense or some kind of universal ethical conscience.

Let us now inspect the attitude of these apologists toward their own chief resource, the Scriptures. If the apologist intends to accept pagan *symbols*, but only in order to reverse the *content* of these symbols so they will reflect Christian teachings, then logically we might suppose he would be tempted to put *accepted Christian symbols* on the shelf. He will attempt to transfer the meaning and significance of the gospel, so to speak, over to the commandeered pagan symbols. To put it simply, the apologist tries to convey the Christian teachings in pagan symbols rather than in the peculiar Christian symbols.

When we examine the writings of Justin and Tertullian, we find that they have indeed made this attempt to translate the biblical message into pagan categories. Furthermore, their attempts were so successful that all later theology has made use of their thought. Though the Fourth Gospel used the Greek word "Logos" before Justin did, Justin took this still-pagan term and demonstrated definitively to the Greeks how its meaning relates to the biblical notion of "Christ the teacher in the flesh" rather than to any kind of human wisdom. Justin's effort in this direction set the stage for the Christology that was to emerge as orthodox in the Council of Nicaea. Justin was not, to be sure, a very good theologian. He ranked the Logos or Son as second to God rather than considering him to be of the same substance. But against the philosophers of the pagan world, he drove home for good the idea that the Logos was an eternal gift of God who "has been made man, that, . . . he may bring us healing" (*Apology* II. 13).

In the same way Tertullian managed to take over some Latin phrases which have become mainstays in all subsequent attempts to find words for the biblical teachings about God's existence as a Trinity. He explicitly tells us that he has had trouble getting ordinary Latin-speaking people to follow—much less accept—the biblical idea of a Trinity. Tertullian well knew that agriculture, war, and civic affairs were the primary planes of reference for the Roman mind, and that it instinctively flew to these "when it was casting about for some means of expressing a new abstract idea—of realizing the unknown in terms of the known." [6] Accordingly, Tertullian turns to Rome's governmental theories for his symbols; and we can almost see the Roman rulers and courts before us when he declares: "Monarchy, because it is the rule of one, does not preclude the monarch, who enjoys that rule, from having a son . . . it does not cease to be a monarchy, if the son also is brought in as a partner in it." (*Against Praxeas* 3.) Here Tertullian is simply attempting to put a biblical content into pagan symbols; for, as he himself is aware, the Trinity, though clearly proved in the Scriptures (*Against Praxeas* 11), could be clearly talked about to these outsiders of the Latin world only in their own language.

This notion of the father-and-son partnership gets over the idea that the one God can have more than one aspect. Now to make the idea of a Trinity as precise as possible, Tertullian turns to another governmental term, *persona*. Originally perhaps an Etruscan word for actor's mask, " 'persona' was used by the Roman legislators to describe a man's personal rights and duties, which were defined according to his position in life." This term permits Tertullian to speak of the functions or aspects of the modes of the Trinity. Hence the famous formula: three *personae* in one *substantia* (the latter a late Latin legal word used to denote goods, property, subject matter—hence real existence, a thing in itself). Without this non-Christian symbolism, Tertullian tells us (and that is what these words were when he took them over), the Latins would not have been able to tell the difference between the Christian God of the Trinity and "the polytheism of the world at large" (*Against Praxeas* 3).

These pagan symbols, "logos," "persona," "substantia," have become prized possessions of all later Christian proclamation, both internal and external. We might conclude that it is never the establishing of a *point of contact* to which the church can legitimately object; it is rather the establishing of a *point of contact that honors the pagan value system.* In true apologetics the pagan symbols have to come under new management, so to speak; and their content, as in the preaching of Justin and Tertullian, must stem from the biblical message rather than from the pagan religions.

We must concede, however, that content and form cannot be neatly separated from each other. When the apologist takes over a pagan symbol with the intent of renovating it for Christian purposes, he may find a little (or a lot) of the old pagan meaning clinging to it, try as he will to eliminate it. The Christmas tree is a good example drawn from our own Western culture of a pagan symbol which has been pressed into the service of the Christian message, but which yet evokes the thought-world of both its Roman and Teutonic pagan backgrounds, and competes all too successfully with the crèche in the meaning which it evokes. The second century was not immune to this danger, as Tertullian's unguarded acceptance of Stoic soul-theory has already shown us. The "naturally Christian soul" of Tertullian is much more natural than it is Christian. In Justin's doctrine of the Logos, too, we detect a considerable trace of the Greek thought-world.

The apologist, then, undertaking what is by its nature a risky assignment, stands in need of a helpful criterion. He cannot simply assume that his job is merely to "repeat" the biblical saga; he must try to convey this saga in the concepts of his audience. He must do his best to insure that he does not slip, in the process, into the promotion of the pagan instead of the biblical message.

Later we must refer to the elaborate machinery that the church finally developed to control the utterances of its spokesmen, including apologists. But here we are chiefly concerned with the use by our two subjects, Justin and Tertullian, of the most obvious criterion—the scriptural source of their preaching. When these apologists attempt to transform the biblical message into pagan categories, do they nevertheless retain a place for the Scriptures as *authority* for what they say?

Justin Martyr is quite clear, as we have seen, that the Logos is implanted in every man. But the net result, so far as Justin is concerned, is only to demonstrate to pagans how dependent they are on the revelation of God. Justin is also clear that the coming of God's word in person as Jesus Christ is meant to bring *saving knowledge*. He is sure that the "seed of the Logos" in every man is not enough, that full revelation of Logos which God has given man in Christ is *necessary* to men for salvation. Justin then conceives of Christ as a teacher, and the purpose of his teaching is to effect "the conversion and restoration of mankind" (*Apology* I. 23).

What is this teaching, necessary to salvation, unavailable to men by their own efforts at wisdom, and offered to mankind now in the incarnation of the Logos? It is, of course, the "word of God." But what is the "word of God"? Here, Justin has no hesitation at all. The word of God is the teaching of God and the teaching of God is intelligence to be gleaned from the Scriptures (more precisely, the Jewish scriptures, for the New Testament had not yet been canonized).

This is why Justin's writings are filled with biblical references. This is why he puts forward interminably the "argument from prophecy" to refer to Christ. This is why he recommends scripture reading to his addresses. (*Apology* I. 63.) To Justin, the Scriptures contain the truth, Christ has come to teach this truth —or better, to *guarantee* it. The function of Justin the apologist is to "constantly appeal to various passages of scripture," and to "beg" men like the Jew Trypho to understand them. (*Dialogue* 68.)

In this age of skepticism and longing for certain knowledge, Justin found faith and certainty in the Old Testament—but only after he had been pointed to it, so to speak, by Christ. The bits and pieces of wisdom which the Greek philosophers offered were now to be superseded by the certainty of whole, saving wisdom. As Harnack remarks of Justin's approach, the philosophers can be expected to ask the right questions, but they are incapable of giving correct answers. God is known only in proportion as he reveals himself, and so for Justin (according to Harnack), "true wisdom is therefore exclusively based on revelation." We have already referred to Miegge's interpretation of Justin's apologetics, that "Christ is the key to the problems of life . . . the totality of truth." We need add only that Christ is "key," especially in the sense of "authenticator." For the revelation itself is in content the Old Testament, and its guarantee against the counterclaims of the pagan world lies in the coming of Christ as full Logos and divine, unifying teacher.

We may conclude, then, that with Justin, despite his attempt to speak God's message in the outsider's language, he does everything in his power to bring his listeners finally under the biblical authority. His main point, in fact, no matter how extra-biblical his language, is always that the word of God may be known certainly only by accepting the authentic teaching of Christ; and that this teaching is the same as the word of God already put into written form via the prophets.

As an apologist, Tertullian evinces by contrast with Justin a notable lack of enthusiasm for the efficacy of scripture. He deliberately bypasses scripture to appeal to natural revelation. The Scriptures are divine, he concedes and even argues—*but so is the soul*. Either can be confidently consulted by the salvation seeker. Those who are so far from believing that they cannot even trust their own literature will be well advised then, not to seek truth from the Scriptures, but rather to turn to the natural perceptive ability of the soul. "Neither God nor nature is capable of lying. In order to trust nature as well as God, trust the soul." (*Testimony of the Soul* 6.)

In his apologetic writings, Tertullian is halfhearted with his use of arguments from authority, which are his main reliance in his dogmatic and moral writings aimed at insiders. He does not carry out his appeals to tradition very consistently with outsiders. He makes sparing use of Justin's favorite tool, the argument from prophecy. In the *Apology*, Tertullian promises a historical survey for the purpose of showing that the Scriptures are prior to all other wisdom (a thought which he takes over from Justin). But in Tertullian's hands this method comes down mainly to the same old appeal to natural perception with which we are already familiar.

He boggles. The task of actually proving that the Scriptures are prior to other knowledge, Tertullian declares, "would take a long time." The archives of a host of nations would have to be searched. Numerous foreigners would have to be interviewed. Anyway, it is a partial proof merely to mention the places from which the proof can be secured. It is much better to postpone the proof. (*Apology* 19.)

On second thought, Tertullian decides the "proof" might still leave doubt. Probably he feels this way because he already believes to begin with that the pagan soul is more easily reached by universal common sense and the like rather than by appeals to Christian authority or proof. At any rate, he concludes that it is much better to "draw attention to the high quality of the Sacred Scriptures in case we do not prove them divine on the score of their antiquity" (*Apology* 20.1). The truth of the matter seems to be that Tertullian has no idea whatever how to use arguments based on authority when he is dealing with an outside audience palpably beyond the claim, for the time being at least, of that authority. This attitude, of course, is quite unlike the one he manifests in his writings against the gnostic Christians, where he does not mind at all bringing matters to a summary conclusion by insisting bluntly on the force of tradition.

When we see how different Tertullian's apologies are from his writings intended for internal consumption, we are almost tempted to conclude that history has confused the works of two different men and represented the same man, Tertullian, as author of both. But we do not really need to draw this conclusion. A much sounder one is that Tertullian simply takes his apologetics seriously—too seriously, perhaps. He regards scripture, tradition, and indeed the authority of the visible church itself as of less value in speaking to outsiders than the same elements when employed in the internal tasks of preaching and keeping faith pure.[7]

The Impulse Beyond Authority

We can see the dangers of apologetic work as well as the need for it and the rightness of it in the writings of these second-century theologians. What is surprising, however, is that Justin usually represents apology wisely conceived (i. e., as a point of conflict) and Tertullian, a hero of the enemies of apologetics, often becomes our example of the careless spokesman who threatens to erase the unique character of Christianity. For Tertullian (as an apologist, but not as a dogmatician) the soul is the generally reliable bridge to the pagan mind across which the arguments of common sense, if not those of scriptural authority, may be freely transported. Justin's reliance is rather on the implanted logos in every man; and, on the whole, he is much more convinced than Tertullian that both this preliminary light from God and ordinary built-in human abilities as well must be superseded by the new, fleshly revelation of Christ.

Both Justin's "implanted logos" and Tertullian's "natural perception" are valid points of contact; but the former, much more than the latter, is finally interpreted as a point of conflict. Tertullian, much more than Justin, fails to use his medium of communication with the outsider as a means of denying the truth of the outsider's belief.

Yet there is another side to the matter. We must not simply write off Tertullian's apologetic venture, even though in the end we must pronounce it unsafe (and probably unsuccessful). Underneath Tertullian's rather disappointing venture into apologetics lies a valuable truth for us in our attempt to seek ways of dealing with the twentieth-century "outsider to faith." *The apologist by definition operates beyond the formal authority of the organized church.* He deals with the outsider, not with the acknowledged believer. He can call neither on the authority of the church nor on the biblical symbols which are oriented strongly about that authority. He must seek to express his faith in terms of a mutually accepted medium of communication—in terms of secular or lay symbols, as we could say.

At this point we might remind ourselves again of the adventures of Father Borelli in Naples with the *scugnizzi* (Chapter II). Just as this priest exchanged his cassock for the garb of a homeless drifter, so Tertullian has exchanged the formal symbols of churchly authority for the lay-oriented symbols of a despairing culture. Once the medium of communication is established the apologist can proceed to the message of faith, which becomes at the same time a revealer of the recipient's incompleteness and sin. This is the stage where Father Borelli appears among the urchins—now in his priest's robes—and leads them off the streets into the cathedral. The fact that Tertullian apparently does not take this necessary second step of apologetics—that of pointing to the conflict with pagan culture—in no way invalidates the principles at stake here. It does, however, confirm in a roundabout way the judgment of history that Tertullian is best thought of as a moralist and dogmatician to the insider rather than as apologist to the outsider.

The Latent Church Among Pagans

By endorsing second-century views on speaking to the outsider, some will say, we have painted the church into a corner. We have given up the universality of its authority. Tertullian's mode of operation, we found, was to leave behind him the formal authoritative symbols which the church had been in the habit of using to protect its message and command attention to it. Tertullian does not know how to use the argument from tradition when he is facing outsiders. He does not believe in the efficacy of scripture where the pagans are concerned. He does not make any serious use of the argument from prophecy. Instead, he prefers to appeal directly to the soul and rely on its natural perceptive abilities.

In leaving the churchly symbols of authority behind, Tertullian seems far less conservative than Justin Martyr. Both, we have said, see the need for a point of contact. Both see the need for a point of *conflict*. But only Justin thoroughly attempts to make good this insight. This he does by leading the pagan finally to the Scriptures as the authoritative answer to his salvation problems. Justin is utterly clear on this point: "My purpose is to establish that our beliefs, which we have received from Christ and the prophets who preceded him, are the sole truth, . . . for the conversion and restoration of mankind." (*Apology* I. 23.) But Tertullian seems to say that we cannot speak to outsiders and at the same time insist on asserting the authority of the Scriptures, the tradition of the church, or anything of the kind.

By permitting Tertullian's view to stand are we not giving away all the arguments we have won? Are we not once more apologists in the hands of an angry Barth? If Tertullian's view of the point of contact is accepted, we seem to be in the position of limiting the universal scope of the revelation God has given to the church.

We do not need to endorse Tertullian's entire apologetic misadventure in order to see truth in it. That grain of truth we have stated already in operational terms, i.e., that the distinctive element of apologetic preaching was the deliberate use of symbols at large to speak beyond the circle of conscious believers. Now we can put the same point in terms of the doctrine of the church: the apologists in effect assumed a *latent church* in the pagan culture; their symbols, drawn from this culture, had the aim of transforming this latent church into an organized church.

The Anti-Gnostic Problem

To which it may be objected: But only the organized church of the older Christian community possessed sure symbols of authority, such as scripture, tradition, the hierarchy. A so-called "latent church," having no such criteria of authority to define it, must inevitably blend invisibly into the surrounding culture, just as Tertullian's "naturally Christian souls" appear to remain thoroughly pagan.

Perhaps we may clear up this matter by comparing the apologetic work of Justin and Tertullian briefly with the theological work of other church Fathers of the second century. Such men as Irenaeus and indeed, Tertullian himself when he was writing for consumption *within* the church, faced a problem of a far different kind from the one we have been describing.

These "internal" writings—treatises like Tertullian's *Against Praxeas* and *Against Marcion* and Irenaeus' *Against Heresies*—were aimed at protecting the faith from the heretical onslaught of certain insiders, especially the Gnostics. It was from these "dogmatic," "antiheretic," or "anti-Gnostic" writings, as they are variously called, that the church learned to look upon its distinctive symbols as ways of protecting the faith from corruption.

For example, certain converts, versed in oriental mysticological myth and in possession of just enough philosophical knowledge to express themselves well, had attempted to sever the historical ties of the distinctive Christian symbols and to take them over for themselves and their miscellany of myths and pseudophilosophy.[8] The anti-Gnostic, addressing theological dabblers who were misusing Christian symbols, had to insist on the discontinuity and sanctity of these symbols. Irenaeus believes that the Gnostic cannot be allowed to play about with the basic idea of God, "and imagine another God above the Demiurge and Maker and Nourisher of the universe, as if he were not enough for us, or another Christ or another Only-begotten" (*Against Heresies* I. 10).

Thus the content of the Christian faith, while it may be "unfolded" or put into the words which men must use in order to understand it, must not itself be exchanged for the wild imaginings of "these teachers who are indeed void of divine understanding." This conception of proclamation as expounded by Irenaeus need not conflict with the one held by the apologists, who, addressing a philosophically responsible outside audience which did not happen to participate in the older traditional symbols, had to assume only that the Christian message was not tied to a particular set of symbols. Justin, for example, could discuss the Trinity in the terms of Alexandrian philosophy (setting a precedent for all future theologians); Tertullian could use Stoic language and Latin civic symbols for the same purpose; and so on.

Our point is this: the *content* of the Christian faith, as contemplated by Irenaeus and the antiheretical "dogmatists" was the same as that contemplated by Justin and the outsider-seeking apologists. (The fact that Irenaeus differed in details from Justin and was a superior theologian in his Christology is, at the moment, beside the point.) The correspondence between these two separate proclamation activities, internal and external, is shown by the action of the anti-Gnostic fathers, when they found it necessary to make rigorous philosophical statements against the Gnostics and other heretics. They unhesitatingly took over the Logos doctrine and other symbols that first had been tested in the preaching of the apologists.

We may say then that the apologist customarily communicated about the gospel in symbols at large acquired from offensive operations against the outsider and that the anti-Gnostic communicated about the same gospel in symbols given a discontinuous status by defensive service within the community. The apologist preached a unique faith which he never imagined as dependent for its uniqueness on any given set of symbols or any given language. The anti-Gnostic preached an inverse truth about this faith—that being unique it could not abolish any of its symbols and hope to remain the same (this against Marcion who would do away with the Old Testament), or lend any of them to outside systems (this, e.g., against men like Valentinus who would substitute under the symbol of God "an innumerable crowd of Aeons" for the Christian maker of heaven and earth). Gnosticism is *not* the secularizing of Christianity, but rather "the verbal Christianizing of paganism." The really dangerous proclamation-activity lies not in seeking secular symbols with which to express biblical meanings, but rather in the opposite course—i.e., providing secular meaning for biblical symbols.

It seems reasonable to suppose, then, that men like Irenaeus did not explicitly entertain a notion of the universal authority of the churchly language or symbols they were using. They enforced these symbols *within* the organized church as a means of preventing misinterpretation. What possesses universal authority is the gospel itself, not the putting forward of it in certain precise form. It is true that with the growth of a strong center of authority in the persons of the bishops—and later the Pope—the theologians would begin to insist that precise language itself had to be maintained. Indeed, some of the very symbols developed for theology by the effort to address the outsider became transformed into exact receptacles of doctrine about which, beyond narrow limits, there could be no further give-and-take. The dogmatizing of the Logos Christology and the misfortune of Arius at the Council of Nicaea, after he had taken liberties with this doctrine, illustrate the tendency. Therefore the anathemas of the ecumenical councils were fully as ominous for personal, free-lance apologetics as they were for heresy.

The essence of the apologists' approach was the use of lay-oriented symbols rather than the discontinuous symbols of tradition. The real contribution of the apologist, we conclude, lies not in any completeness of doctrine or in his orthodoxy, but rather in his ability to find ways of speaking to the outsider. As Harnack remarks of Tertullian, "what influenced the history of dogma was not his Christianity, but his masterly power of framing formulae."

Status of the Pagans

If the apologists, even while disdaining the traditional symbols of faith, could mean so much to the church in virtue of their work with outsiders, it seems wrong to think of them as actually *leaving the church* to undertake their work. They did leave behind the organized church, the body of avowed believers, and the conventional symbols-language of faith. But we must now press to an important conclusion about this second-century proclaimer who stands on the boundary between the institution and outside recipients of its message. As we have said, in preaching beyond the old, organized church, he is actually preaching within a new, not-yet-organized or *latent* church. And the pagans to whom he speaks are also residents of the boundary, situated beyond the ecclesiastical institution but living within a newly appearing realm of redemption.

> They stand, so to speak, upon the dotted line, which is laid down in God's plan but is not yet completely drawn in. They are the people whom God has created, to whom He testifies of Himself, and whom He preserves with a view to their deliverance. They are people who stand under God's patience.[9]

In a sense, the pagan's time of waiting before he hears the apologist's preaching corresponds to the infant's time of waiting between his baptism and his mature decision to enter the church. Just as the faith of the church can stand in the place of the conscious faith of youngsters, so its faithful intent to activate the latent church can stand in the place of the pagan's affirmation until the apologist reaches him and he can decide for himself.

We are not implying that God's word in saving form is already hidden in pagan culture, waiting to be mined by the knowing apologist. On the contrary, the apologist intends to preach the biblical message of the unique revelation in Christ, and this in its full depth (though he often fails himself to see the depth). We are not implying that pagan culture itself is a church, or a branch of the church. We are saying rather that God's word is for all men and that the church on earth is world-wide—at least as a blueprint. We can well think of the latent church in the same manner that Kierkegaard thinks of the possibilities for a "God-relationship":

> Nature, the totality of created things, is the work of God. And yet God is not there; but within the individual man there is a potentiality (man is potentially spirit) which is awakened in inwardness to become a God-relationship, and then it becomes possible to see God everywhere.[10]

It may be up to human proclaimers of the word to bring the consciousness of the biblical revelation to pagans, but these proclaimers do not take responsibility for the entry of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the pagans—they could not take this responsibility if they wanted to. When this proclamation takes place on "new ground" where no formal church exists, it is correct to think of it as leading the hearers into and through a latent church. In its turn this latent church becomes part of the institution; and its symbols, once novel and secular, become orthodox and churchly.

Perhaps Justin Martyr and Tertullian speak out of an insight that has often eluded both Catholic and Protestant proclaimers since the Reformation. This is the insight that the visible church and the Scriptures are mutually dependent on each other. Neither can survive outside the field of influence of the other. Moreover, both are no more than secondary witnesses to the prime reality, which is the Word of God itself, enfleshed in Jesus Christ.

The Bible and its symbols, the church and its symbols—these have force only within the community of believers. This limitation of their scope of authority follows if it is true that "these two things, the record—the Bible—and the faith of the Church are indivisibly linked together; they check and interpret each other." As Raymond Abba argues, "Both are handed down from generation to generation within the Church: both are necessary for its continued life, and neither of them can stand alone."[11] The apologist then must leave the symbols of this dual authority behind him, even though he may want to reconstruct the same authority with new symbols.

As we shall have occasion to note again when we come to the twentieth century's apologetic problems, the church on earth actually takes three forms with respect to history, and in a Christianized culture it exists in all three simultaneously. The church is a *not-yet* for some, an *is-now* for others, and a *has-been* for still others. These three states are the Latent Church, the Manifest Church, and the Dormant Church. (The latter, of course, is made up of those half-christianized outsiders who are the object of much of our contemporary apologetic effort.) Our mission is to convert both the "not-yet" and the "has-been" into the "is-now." But to do so, we must admit the existence of that which we are seeking to convert.

We may summarize our view of the latent church as follows:

Because the recipient is outside and apart from the orienting authority of the organized church, the apologist is driven by necessity to seek a point of contact on other terms. He looks about for suitable pagan thought forms and lay-oriented symbols. In effect, the word of the apologist becomes a way of organizing a church out of anticipation. For at the moment he addresses the pagan on behalf of the Christian faith, the pagan stands as a potential member of the church. The outsider hearing the apologist, stands on the boundary between a latent community of faith and the proper activity of faith. When the apologist speaks, the word that is universal has overlooked the strangeness and recency of the latecomer by accepting his strange language and calling it now an active medium of the word. So the church that is already world-wide in God's command has become more nearly so in man's response.

The intent and purpose of the proclamation to outsiders, let us recall, is not simply to engage in bridgebuilding or to validate the pagan symbols and categories as Christian. Rather, the aim of the apologist is to convince the outsider of the futility of his system and of the sin of his situation. Even the highest pagan ethics will become, under the preaching of the apologist, a mere demonstration of what the law of God requires of every man. The only result of apologetics, if it leads to the inner message of scripture, is that every man is condemned by this law rather than saved by it.

I have the feeling that the mission of second-century apologetics is exhausted at this point. That is, its essential function is: (1) to establish a point of contact; (2) to show this point of contact as a point of conflict. Or, to put it in alternative terms, it is (1) to show that pagan ethics at their highest are no more than a statement of the requirements of the law of God; (2) to show that this law condemns men, even when they try to carry it out. In brief, I am suggesting that apologetic work in the second century falls short of a vital second task of proclamation (in addition to preaching the law)—and that is the preaching of grace.

Justin and Tertullian embrace doctrines of free will and suppose that every man is able to win salvation by fulfilling the commands of God—if only he possesses a reliable key to the information concerning these requirements. The notion that grace comes to undeserving sinners by the work of Christ is perhaps present in the dogmatic theology of Irenaeus, but not in the apologetic thought of Justin and Tertullian.

I take it as a working principle then that apologetic work operates within the latent church, though beyond the organized church; that it freely uses symbols out of the culture, trusting that it will be able to represent the biblical message in the secular vocabulary of the audience. The establishment of a point of contact is aimed ultimately at penetrating to the existential situation of the recipient and showing it to be one of sin (so Bultmann) or despair (so Tillich). The apologist, however, insofar as he makes contact through a set of pagan symbols, preaches in the last analysis only a partial Christian truth. He never moves beyond the law; he speaks at most of the wrath of God.

Though it may lead only to a revelation of the law, apologetic preaching is a mission that cannot be rejected. It is the necessary concomitant to the preaching of grace. The outsider is, to be sure, already an insider (as Barth insists) in the sense that God wills all men to hear him. But if the men of the organized church are partners with these strangers, then they must become outsiders themselves in speaking to them.

NOTES

1. Cyril C. Richardson, "The Foundations of Christian Symbols," in *Religious Symbolism*, ed. F. Ernest Johnson (Religion and Civilization Series [New York: Institute of Religious and Social Studies, 1955]), p. 14.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Giovanni Miegge, *Christian Affirmations in a Secular Age*, tr. Stephen Neill (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 65.
4. Henry Bettenson, *The Early Christian Fathers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), Introduction, pp. 13-19.
5. A. Harnack, *History of Dogma*, tr. Neil Buchanan (Boston: Roberts Bros., 1897), II, 196, 198-99.
6. Owen Barfield, *History in English Words* (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1954), p. 36.
7. Pierre de Labriolle, *Historie de la Littérature Latine Chrétienne* (Paris: Belles-Lettres, 1947), I, 133.
8. Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), I, 574. Wolfson regards Gnosticism as a mythological rather than a speculative kind of thinking.
9. Freytag, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
10. Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr. David F. Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press for American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1941), p. 221.
11. Raymond Abba, *The Nature and Authority of the Bible* (London: James Clarke & Co., 1958), p. 300.

CHAPTER IV

SEEKING THE OUTSIDER TODAY

If our modern outsider were like those faced by the second-century apologists, whose work we have just explored in Chapter III, the task of communicating with him would be relatively simple. It would consist, roughly, in tracking down the most important values in his mind, in demonstrating the obviout conflict between these values and Christian teachings, and finally in asking this hearer of ours to accept the clearly superior Christian values.

In the twentieth century we can no longer draw such a clear-cut distinction between Christian and pagan values, for they are all mixed up in the head of our outsider. His brain is teeming with a mixture of Christian notions (which he may not take very seriously, to be sure) and assorted canons of secular wisdom drawn from the industrial age—and he isn't really sure which is which. At times neither is the communicator.

How, then, do we go about making contact with this *modern* outsider? That, after all, is our problem. In this chapter we shall try to get down to business with it. But first let's take another look at this outsider of ours.

Under the direction of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations in Chicago, forty-three divinity students from ten theological seminaries put in a summer vacation working in various factories. They talked to employees, listened to their discussions of religious matters, and attended churches in factory districts.

When the students returned to their classes in the fall, they had been subjected to a shocking firsthand encounter with a prime specimen of the outsider: the American factory worker.

Members of the working class, they decided as a result of the summer's experience, habitually fail to understand sermons. Even when the workers did understand them, they often found the subject matter and approach unrelated to the lives of working people. From the point of view of the laboring class, the students learned, many churches appear to be cold and unfriendly and to cater to the employer class.

The directors of this project issued a melancholy report. Theological words that are familiar to church leaders "may have little, or no, value to men whose background is unlike our own." If the church is to continue its attempts to speak to people beyond its doors, the report continues, at least its leaders should be aware that we do not communicate "what we assume we are communicating." [1]

Two of the seminarians who worked in a steel mill for the summer concluded that many key biblical symbols—such as "sin," "grace," "redemption,"—meant nothing to the workmen. Another student reported the inevitable result: the growth of social barriers which thrust the worker further and further outside the orbit of the organized church. He explained: "Workingmen don't flock to support a church abounding with prejudices, traditions, and dear old ladies who call it 'their' church."

In our time it is not just the workingmen who seem estranged from the church and from the assurances of its gospel as well. Our whole Western culture often appears to have slipped into a new skepticism.

It is possible to argue that our twentieth-century religious predicament is similar to the second century's, and that the approaches of Justin Martyr and Tertullian to the outsider might be appropriate for us to use. For example, Robert E. Fitch suggests that we live in a "neo-Hellenistic age." Our world is shorn of purpose and direction by forces reminiscent of the late period of classical culture: by relativism, impressionism, skepticism. Men have decided that they no longer want either to know the truth or to be free. "They want what the Roman world wanted in its decline—*ataraxia, apathia*—tranquility, indifference, the peace that by-passeth understanding."

If the intellectual climate of our time resembles that of classical pagan times, why not proceed to speak to our generation as if it were heathen? Why not adopt, point for point, the methods of Justin Martyr and Tertullian? Christianity in the modern age has been murdered, turned out, stood on its head, asserts Kierkegaard, and "the people live as pagans." Why not treat them as pagans, then?

Two barriers lie in our way and make our job of communicating with the outsider too complex to treat him simply as an old-style pagan. These barriers stand not so much between us and our audience as between us and the past; they suggest that all methods of dealing with outsiders in the past must be revised for present-day purposes.

The first of these barriers, as we have seen, is the mixed character of the modern audience. We have already defined the outsider as a half-Christian beyond the effective call of the manifest or organized church. Though this status may make him seem virtually a pagan, and though Kierkegaard can speak of Christendom as if it were a "pagan" culture, the comparison is not to be pursued seriously. For the neo-pagan of Christendom is infinitely harder to communicate with than is the ancient pagan or the modern heathen amenable to "missionary" methods.

The second barrier is the advent of mass communications. The apologists of the second century were essentially amateur proclaimers of the gospel, relying on intensely personal testimony to make their points before the pagans. The churches and denominations of today cannot speak in this private, personal way; rather, their messages inevitably turn out to be institutional communication, which is nearly always transmitted over one or more of the impersonal mass media—print, film, radio, television. Even the most zealously sectarian religious groups of our American culture speak what is to any normal ear an organizational or institutional message. I was made to realize this not long ago by the minister of a sect which places extreme stress on congregational polity. He explained to me with some relish how his group, despite its announced enmity to official, central organization, could still maintain a missions program, colleges, and even a theological seminary!

The secret is that all these projects are sponsored technically by "members" of the denomination; no over-all boards and agencies are visible to the naked eye, no institutional "program" is acknowledged. These unencumbered Christians claim to a man that they do not even constitute a "denomination." But to all intents and purposes, these "members" in their activities coalesce into a powerful organization, dangerous because it is covert, but no less real and no more scriptural than the various organizations of the Baptists, Methodists, and Episcopalians. My friend in this sect goes so far as to espy what amounts to a "general conference" of his group; this function is served through a series of lectures sponsored annually by the denomination's most prestigious college. Without drawing out my account, I simply observe also that these "individuals" have gotten together to advertise in the *Atlantic*, and the creedalistic summary which appeared there disclosed as much unanimity and programmatic character as the very similar advertising of the Knights of Columbus.

This kind of collective action always depends on an organization and an official program, whether it is called that or not. So the bridge of "private testimony" is burned behind us, despite the illusions of sectarian thinkers. We can never model our apology exactly on Justin's or Tertullian's for this reason.

These two barriers—the changed character of the audience and the advent of mass, impersonal communication—are so critical to our study that we must now consider each of them separately and in some detail.

"Point of Contact" with the Christianized Outsider

Overcoming the Illusion of Christianity

Perhaps when Christianity came into the world, Kierkegaard observes, "the task was simply to proclaim Christianity." In this kind of situation the faith had to be announced in direct fashion as a manifestly unknown truth; inevitably some proclamatory energy had to be devoted to the development of terms and categories. In modern, civilized Christendom, however, the situation is vastly different.

The already-Christianized recipient stands in need, not of acquiring categories to believe with, but of believing with the categories he already has. The people in this situation are neither Christians nor pagans—they are outsiders of one kind or another. All have retained the favorite Christian symbols as various illusions, often including the conceit they are 100 per cent Christians; but they do not evince serious commitment to the manifest church.

Their illusion builds precisely on the Christian symbols which they hold in consciousness. That is what makes an old-fashioned apologetic approach, an effort to find "common ground" between recipient and proclaimer, so dangerous. If Christianity is to be introduced into this kind of situation, it must *take the place of*, and not simply strengthen, the pseudo-Christianity of the times. As Kierkegaard puts it, "first of all the illusion must be disposed of." But since the illusion is to the effect we are all Christians, "it looks indeed as if introducing Christianity were taking Christianity away from men." Nevertheless, the illusion must go.[2]

> Because everybody knows it, the Christian truth has gradually become a triviality, of which it is difficult to secure a primitive impression. This being the case, the art of *communication* at last becomes the art of *taking away*, of luring something away from someone. This seems very strange and ironical, and yet I believe that I have succeeded in expressing precisely what I mean. When a man has his mouth so full of food that he is prevented from eating, and is like to starve in consequence, does giving him food consist in stuffing still more of it in his mouth, or does it consist in taking some of it away, so that he can begin to eat? [3]

Kierkegaard's solution for proclamation in this kind of situation is the use of "indirect communication"—that is, the self-activity of inward, personal appropriation of what was previously known only in an objective way. "As soon as the truth, the essential truth, may be assumed to be known by everyone, the objective becomes appropriation and inwardness, and here only an indirect form is applicable." We do not need to pursue the matter of indirect communication much further. Essentially, it is only the complicated, obscure, and overly sophisticated way in which Kierkegaard chose to discuss the necessity of decision. Let us pursue, instead, the consequences for apologetics of the distinction Kierkegaard has made between the ancient, classical pagan and the modern, Christianized pagan.

The modern American, even if he rarely goes to church, may easily convince himself that he lives according to Christian standards. Even if he is the first to admit, "I'm not a very good Christian," the chances are that in some part of his moral make-up he will regard himself as living and deciding by the New Testament principles, by the ideals of Jesus, or some related criterion. Yet his life will in its essential style be molded by the situations he faces outside the church, by the business and social realities in which he is immersed, rather than by any persistent or massive attempt to learn and apply the ethics of Jesus. I have Sunday-school pupils (high-school twelfth-graders) who will one and all solemnly assure me on Sunday morning that they are avowed Christians. But they will, in fact, decide everything between then and the next Sunday on the basis of the amount of money they have in their pockets, the availability of the right girl, disposability of the hours, desirability of being at the dance Friday night, etc.

How shall we communicate with them? Seize upon the few points in their lives where Christianity *does* seem to have a hold? Attempt to magnify these small beginnings until the call of faith has spread over their entire lives? That is the usual approach.

That would be a hopeless undertaking, according to Kierkegaard. We simply cannot point out the conflict with Christianity in the life of a person who is sure of his Christianity—least of all if we start with the very part of that person's existence which he most proudly calls Christian. To go to the Christianized symbols held in the consciousness of the modern citizen as a way of getting him to be seriously Christian is only to augment a delusion. He will convert your seriousness into his indifference before you have a chance even to talk about the point of conflict that is represented by every point of contact.

When the recipient is under the impression that he is already Christian, the point of contact cannot be selected from Christian motifs. Even if the point of contact is conceived as a point of conflict, this interpretation cannot be driven home for *Christian* symbols and ideas unseriously entertained by the recipient. A mental short circuit will occur, draining the power from any talk about conflict.

> In an age of knowledge, when all men are Christians and know what Christianity is, it is only too easy to use the sacred names without attaching any thought to them, to recite the Christian truth by rote without having the slightest impression of it.[4]

Kierkegaard is saying here that nominal Christian affirmations cannot be the common ground between the modern church and the modern outsider, for the church will inevitably succeed by that course only in seeming to encourage trivial affirmations.

Another way of putting it is that a nominally entertained Christian symbol when chosen as the point of contact will obliterate the Christian meaning underneath instead of yielding to it. We can see this danger most clearly by turning for a moment to the question of communication between Christianity and Islam. The faith of the Moslems emerged out of a sixth-century Arabian milieu that had become patiently nominal or desultory in its Christian affirmations. In the resulting religion of Islam many formally Christian symbols have been retained, but only in a trivial and meaningless way. If one attempts to penetrate Islam with the gospel by means of these symbols, one reaps only frustration. Let us take, for example, the category of Christ, which has lost ultimate value in Islam and has been transformed into the commonplace *nabi 'Isa* (the prophet Jesus). The many elements of Islam which have been derived from Christianity "belong to a different plane of religious apprehension, whose whole tendency is anti-Christian. The *nabi 'Isa* of Islam has no connection whatever with Jesus Christ; so that veneration of 'Isa as a prophet is no means for his enrichment as the eternal Christ." [5] It is not going too far to say that Kierkegaard's "Christendom" really amounts to a kind of new Islam, which includes in its vocabulary all the old Christian words and symbols, but which transforms them into other categories. It turns Jesus Christ into a twentieth-century, American *nabi 'Isa:* The Jesus of American Christianity—good man, great coach, founder of group dynamics. Far from being a point of contact with the judging Christ, this Jesus simply eliminates him from view.

We have all seen the truth of Kierkegaard's dictum illustrated over the last few years in the field of race relations. After the 1954 Supreme Court decision condemning public-school segregation, many a minister seized upon this court pronouncement as a Christian "point of contact" with intelligent, law-abiding members of society. "Christianity and good citizenship coincide perfectly here," these ministers argued in effect. But what is the result of this uncritical identification of Christianity with the coercive processes of law? It means there is no way to present Christianity as anything but an ethical system. "Brotherhood," a Christian motif, comes to have chiefly a legal meaning; i.e., that racial barriers are to be lifted where the law requires it. When the minister of a church in Nashville attempted to build on this point of contact and convince the law-abiding laymen that they should admit a certain Negro family to congregational fellowship, he was heatedly opposed—and eventually defeated. It was a spurious point of contact. The members of a vestry or a board of deacons may acquiesce in public-school integration as a matter of Christian citizenship; but the legal complexion of this act of cultural Christianity more often than not obscures the voluntary Christian meaning of the whole notion of fellowship.

It would actually be better for racial brotherhood if Christian ministers could preach *against* the Supreme Court decision as requiring by force what should be done by one and all out of love. To do so directly, however, would run afoul of the hard hearts among segregationists who also sail defiantly under the Christian colors. No matter what the minister does with the point of contact he supposes to be offered him in the Supreme Court decision, he risks damaging the cause of the gospel: If he portrays it as a positive point of contact between Christianity and democracy, the good, law-abiding citizens are confirmed in the illusion that legally enforced integration equals brotherhood, and the end of their responsibility. If, on the other hand, he portrays the court action as a point of *conflict* with the gospel, the die-hard segregationists are confirmed in the illusion that white supremacy is of divine institution. Kierkegaard then seems to be right: we must be wary of any point of contact between half-Christianity and whole-Christianity.

Another difficulty, when the half-Christian is identified as a good start toward the fully Christian, is that the half-Christian then becomes exempt from further criticism. Once more in the case of race relations many humanistic groups having been given the imprimatur of the church because of their interest in ending segregation have then escaped judgment from the church which they badly need.

A better way of facing this problem is to view the Supreme Court segregation decision not as a secular Ten Commandments but rather as a necessary part of the government's nonreligious operations. Hence it would no longer tempt us as a half-Christianized common ground with the church. Then it might be possible to establish contact on *non-Christian* grounds with the court decision, finding reasons in our status as citizens (not as Christians) for obeying it. Finally, this "contact" with the legal side of our democracy having been established, it would be time to bring in Christianity, now as a *conflicting* *force*, no longer hamstrung by embarrassing ties to a Christianized legalism. The gospel is ever a conflict with a society which has to depend on laws for enforcement of brotherhood.

An Approach to Apologetic Method

The proclaimer's job, then, is to bypass all half-Christian projects and to avoid finding his point of contact in any idea or symbol that may be taken to be explicitly Christian in its derivation. If a given idea or symbol may be interpreted either as a Christian entity or as a secular one, the apologist must forcefully interpret it as the latter (just as, e.g., the Supreme Court ruling on segregation must be interpreted as a governmental act rather than a masked piece of Christian proclamation). He then avoids the danger that the half-Christian will obliterate the Christian, and he leaves his proclamation free to point out as the next step the necessary conflict between secular culture and gospel.

Kierkegaard likens this task of avoiding the near-Christian to the job of a fire chief. In Christendom, he says, the proclaimer who has something serious to say about Christianity, and who wishes to make it something more than a game, must steel himself to the project of having to cut away from a bystanding crowd of "twaddlers." Chances are he will already find them there ahead of him, just as a fire chief does when arriving at the burning building—a company of them, "who with cheerful cordiality have sort of a notion that things are wrong, or are prepared to chatter about things being dreadfully wrong, and to be self-important for chattering about it." Like the fire chief he must push his way through this company and get on with his job, having nothing to do with the twaddlers. He must be as "coarse-mouthed" with them as possible. Everything depends upon getting rid of the half-serious, for their effect "in the form of hearty sympathy," is to eradicate the real seriousness from the cause.[6]

Where does this leave us? Perhaps we must give up the effort to speak to outsiders, seeing that in our society all of us have been permeated more or less with half-Christian values. Kierkegaard's warning, however, does not drive so much against apologetics itself as against making contact at the wrong point.

It is only natural to assume that we must take advantage of whatever dormant Christianity lies in the breast of twentieth-century moderns; but that is the big mistake. To seek common ground with what is nominally Christian in neopagans is the best way to speed our departure from the gospel, and it may be a departure into a worse state even than classical paganism. Far from reverting to the plane of heathen existence, dechristianized man falls below it.[7]

What Kierkegaard is really warning us against, as we now can see, is the very opposite of apologetics. His cries put us on guard, not against trying to talk to the outsider in the outsider's language, but against trying to talk to the outsider in the *conventional Christian language*. What is perilous is to attempt the direct proclamation of Christian categories to a post-Christian people who have already discounted the ultimate value resident in these categories. Kierkegaard has warned us, in other words, not against a vigorous program of Christian communication, but against the lack of a program.

At this point, perhaps we should recur to the distinction we have made between the "latent church" and the "dormant church." We have been using the former phrase to designate that area of society not yet marshaled by the explicit proclamation of the biblical message. We have argued that the area being spoken to by an apologist, even though it is not a part of the organized, manifest church, is all the same part of the universal realm of God's anticipation and is thus a latent church which furnishes lay symbols from itself for bearing the gospel message, and which stands ready to enter the organized church after the apologist has proclaimed to it, and its recipients have heard him.

We have used the term "dormant church" to indicate a segment of society which has *fallen away* from the manifest, organized church. In that case, American society would consist in many places and at numerous points of a dormant church, made up of modern outsiders who have taken Christian values and symbols along with them but who are no longer oriented decisively about the call of the visible church in society.

We can make our point clear about the modern apologist by saying that his job is to speak in the latent church rather than the dormant church. It is true that these two nonorganized states of the church are mixed in modern America. If an analogy will be helpful, the apologist should picture his duty as making his way through a mine field. He must tread only on the secularized stretches in the consciousness of his recipients; and he must avoid, as he would a land mine, the nodes where half-Christian values or symbols reign in the consciousness of his hearers.

Kierkegaard's own solution to the pitfall of the half-Christianized categories lurking in all civilized men of the Western world was this: He approached "the problem of Christianity in a decisive manner, but without mentioning its name, nor the name of Christ." That was the procedure he followed in writing his *Philosophical Fragments*. He comments:

> It is always good to be distinguished by something; and I for my part ask nothing better than in the midst of Christendom to be the only one who does not know that the founder of Christianity was Christ: to be ignorant is at any rate better than to be informed about it as about a hundred other trivialities.[8]

Not that Kierkegaard never advances to the place where Christianity can be discussed explicitly. Elsewhere he explains that his approach to apologetics is to *begin* with the non-Christian as a point of contact and to go on from there to the explicitly Christian. It is a matter of moving from the aesthetic realm of life to the religious:

> One does not begin thus: I am a Christian; you are not a Christian. Nor does one begin thus: It is Christianity I am proclaiming; and you are living in purely aesthetic categories. No, one begins thus: Let us talk about aesthetics. . . . One talks thus merely to get to the religious theme.[9]

When we studied the second-century apologists, we reached the conclusion that full proclamation to the outsider may be impossible for the apologist. Justin and Tertullian, we found, seemed to exhaust their talents in the preliminary job of finding symbols in secular culture and infusing these with Christian meaning—a Christian meaning which went no further in its depth than to bring the pagan mind to an awareness of the law of God. The notion of sin could be imparted, we found, but the notion of grace—the unmerited help which God has offered sinners in Christ—was vague, if present at all, in the writings of the apologists.

Now in this study of apologetics in the twentieth century, and of Kierkegaard's warnings, we reach a somewhat similar conclusion: the Kierkegaardian concept of the three stages of life—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious—suggests the possibility that full proclamation in modern Christendom is a combination of "apology" *and something more.* Apology can introduce Christian meaning to a stranger to Christianity, or it can introduce a denizen of "Christendom" to the conflict between his *secular values* and Christianity. But it can do nothing to enrich or deepen his half-Christian values, his dormant Christian categories. Apology consists at most, then, of moving the recipient from the aesthetic stage, where the mandate of no law is recognized, to the ethical stage, where every man's condemned status before the law is revealed.

With the reservations which we have introduced into this chapter we may conclude that seeking the outsider is no less a duty of the modern Christian proclaimer than it was for Christian leaders of the second century. Yet it is a much more complicated and tricky task, since the knack is to avoid a point of contact with the obvious Christian values in the outsider's way of life; and it is necessary, as we have just concluded, to count on something more, something deeper than apology, to bring home the full meaning of God's grace.

The job of adjusting apologetics to the twentieth-century realities is not an easy one. Perhaps we are ready, however, to summarize the place of apologetics in modern domestic proclamation:

1. As in the second century, the apologist seeks common ground with his listener. He can agree with Lincoln Steffens who argued that crusading or reforming newsmen "must sincerely share the cultural ignorance, the superstitions, the beliefs, of their readers, and keep no more than one edition ahead of them." [10]

Yet, as ever, this common ground is in reality a point of conflict. It is a way of bringing the gospel to bear on the outsider's thought at the very point where the latter is in need of help. It shows him that apart from the gospel despair is to be expected.

2. In the twentieth century, however, the whole of secular culture is not at the disposal of the apologist. He must strictly avoid using Christian symbols or Christian categories which may *already* be present in the outsider's view of the world. For in making these values the point of contact he will not be able to show the conflict between Christianity and the world, and the outsider will be confirmed in the illusion that he is already a thoroughgoing Christian.

3. The apologist must then distinguish between the *latent church* and the *dormant church*. The first is the "not-yet" of the manifest church; the second is the "used-to-be" of the manifest church. The first furnishes secular symbols from pagan thought to bear the biblical message on the theory that the pagans are potential partners in the hearing of this message. The dormant church can furnish only symbols of Christian impotence, and proclamation to it must be pursued by other methods than apologetics.

4. Apologetics, then, is incomplete in two ways. *First,* it brings pagans only to an awareness of the conflict between their system and the gospel; it does not offer the pagan a full word of help on how he may reconcile the conflict. That is, it brings the pagan under the law of God but does not easily speak of

grace, of God's unmerited help. *Second,* apologetics is not suited to the problem of reviving dormant belief.

5. Nevertheless, seeking the outsider is a necessary part of present-day church proclamation. It offers, as in the second century, an avenue toward truth and salvation. It still serves as Justin's proclamation did: to provide a key to the problem of life which will bring deliverance from confusion, from conflicting claims to truth, and from mutual contradiction among the values and philosophies of society.

The Use of Mass Communications in Seeking the Outsider

Especially in America Christianity has almost been swept off its feet by the notion that mass media can be used to win new adherents—to entice and draw within its ranks the indifferent and the hitherto unpersuaded. Even the most conservative denominations have thrown off the customs of a past that was dedicated to keeping to themselves and have launched ambitious programs to seek and find the outsider. In 1933, for example, the printing and publishing agency of the Mennonite Church at Scottdale, Pennsylvania, included henceforth as one of its objectives the aim "to extend the borders of the church." In 1952 this same conservative publishing house put its objective even more strongly, setting itself "to give a witness and service by providing and distributing Christian literature outside the denomination." [11]

A recent sociological study, *Small Town in Mass Society,* has a revealing chapter on the religious lives of the people of "Springdale," fictitious name of an agricultural community of 2,500 in upper New York state. While this study does not report the actual practices of the local church leaders in the use of mass media, it does give us a pointed clue as to why so many churchmen turn to the media for seeking outsiders. In the ordinary face-to-face groupings of Springdale's religious life, the church people associate largely with one another and ignore the outsiders.

> The churches are an important part of the life of the whole community because of the public nature of their activities. Most of their social activities are open to anyone who cares to attend. *In practice, however, the public social activities of one church—a supper or ice-cream social, for example—are attended only by members of that and other churches.* Irrespective of which church is sponsor, the clientele for these activities is much the same.[12]

Church life, insofar as it consists of personal relations, stops short of the nonadherent. The outsider is not even sought; only newcomers and the already-churched, "those who have a church affiliation," are visited for evangelistic purposes. "The bulk of the population which is not churchgoing is not the object of missionary work," say Vidich and Bensman. "The ministers and their laymen are often simply unaware of the existence of the traditionally unchurched. They either do not see the unchurched or they have no desire to pollute the church membership with socially undesirable types." [13]

Certain whole classes are effectively beyond the awareness of the church people. "Only a small percentage of industrial workers, who are otherwise similar to the professionals in style of living, are church-involved." One class, the shack people, are completely uncommitted to church life. They neither attend church nor take part in the quasi-social activities that the churches sponsor. Old-time farmers in the area, their rural churches having fallen into disuse, have not been willing to shift their attendance to churches in the town. "They do not participate because of their incapacity to adjust to the 20th century trend to centralized churches." [14]

Person-to-person church activity is then restricted in Springdale to an upper-bourgeois collection of avowed insiders. They are aware that a "community of the damned" exists among them, but they do not or cannot become *present* to these outsiders.

My next comment is a speculation which goes beyond the data that Vidich and Bensman supply. When the pious sense that the damned are all about them, and when the pious are not available as *present* to these damned, the stage is set for the entry of a savior—mass media. A prayer telephone or a pastors' forum on TV will salve the conscience of the pious, even if it will not save the souls of many damned. In their extensive analysis of religious broadcasting programs sponsored by churches in New Haven, Connecticut, Parker, Barry, and Smyth found that practically all were aimed at the recipient *beyond* the church community. Questioned in interviews, all the church leaders using religious programs said they were trying to reach outsiders. Most religious programs, these researchers conclude, "are conceived of as means whereby a religious in-group can make some contact with the multitude outside the fold." [15] (Such programs, we might add, fail almost completely in their purpose. These researchers report that the audience for religious programs is usually composed almost wholly of those who are already within the church, rather than of potential converts.)

We have to draw the conclusion that the modern church group finds it almost impossible to conceive of reaching "outsiders" without making some use of the mass media. Increasingly the newspapers, television, radio, and films are regarded by churchmen as their best hope for getting in touch with the person who does not present himself at church. Though critical of the success of religious mass communications aimed at outsiders, Parker, Barry, and Smyth see no other media at hand for seeking the large Christianized audience today that is composed of people who have become hostile or indifferent to the work of the manifest church. "They are," say these researchers, "the persons to whom the churches have access only through such impersonal and anonymous media as television and radio."

A Comparison with the Second Century

But can anonymous and impersonal media, after all, do the work of apologetics? Here we must remember that second-century apology-making is separated from our age and its problems by two formidable barriers. One is the more complicated religious make-up of our audience: neopagans cannot be approached through the Achilles' heel of half-Christianity which may belong to them; for starting here will only convince them they are "Christians enough" outside the church. The second barrier lies in the changed character of the methods of proclamation. The apologists did not use mass media; we must. Is the difference fatal to the content and effect of proclamation?

Let us return for a moment to the situation confronting Justin Martyr and Tertullian in the second century.

The growth of Christianity in the second century was caused, not by the technical merit of apologetic proclamation, but rather by the unique power of Christianity to provide a redemptive answer to the longing of the age. The burst of apology was empowered by the same force, and the apologists considered themselves to be engaging in person-to-person testimony rather than a professionalized missionary undertaking.

This personal character of communication—and hence one of the real strengths of the apologies—is demonstrated by the stress which the apologists placed on *individual decision* on the part of the recipient. In his first apology Justin Martyr, although he is indeed anxious to have the emperors he addresses become Christians, takes the priority of individual free choice in salvation for granted. He proposes to pass the Christian teachings on *only to those who wish to learn them.* (*Apology* I. 6.) If the wish is there, Justin's written witness to his own faith can be of help to the believer. After all, Justin by fortune of birth comes from the same background as his adherent in the pagan world, and he can presumably put the means of entering the church at their disposal—once they have the will.

Justin, for his part, aims only to deliver a testimony which will put the recipient into touch with scripture itself and show him the life of Christians. If the result is to persuade only a few, that is a secondary consideration. Justin is not interested in number of converts. (*Apology* I. 44.) He specifically denies that it is his duty to convert the Jew Trypho. His main task is to "constantly appeal to various passages of Scripture," and to "beg" Trypho to understand them. If at this point, however, Trypho is not convinced, Justin says, "I surely will suffer no harm, but holding fast to my former convictions, I will go my way" (*Dialogue* 68).

Tertullian, too, insists that the object of apologetic writing is to make personal testimony rather than to engage in wholesale conversion. What makes Christianity grow is not its program of evangelism but its faith, and the Christians are strongest when the pagans press them the hardest. "We become more numerous every time we are hewn down by you: the blood of the Christians is seed." (*Apology* 50. 13.) Whoever sees Christians under duress also sees through the rumors and label thinking that misled the Romans; he is struck with uneasiness and driven to inquire seriously of the Christian. When he learns the truth in this way—something infinitely more demanding than reading a document—then he may be expected to become a Christian. (*To Scapula* 5; *Apology* 2. Cf. Justin *Apology* I. 4; Tatian *Address* 27.)

In any event, to Tertullian apology is of value in conversion only where there is *already* some basis of conversion. Below the level of literary communication, Christian depth makes contact with the natural depth of the soul. *Thus apologetic work cannot create faith, though faith can awaken faith.*

The point, for our purposes, is this: the apologist does not spend his time in the professional pursuit of making others Christians. At bottom, he is describing his own personal encounter with Christianity for the aid and comfort of the recipient—who needs exactly this introduction to faith in order to decide for himself.

To the degree that contemporary Christian communicators consider their apologetic task to be built around official programs, and the mass media as ideal transmitting agencies for this impersonal material—to that extent they are in danger of losing the personal approach that characterized second-century apologetic work.

A Point of View Toward Mass Media

As a matter of fact, the mass media in themselves are often nothing more than neutral servants at our disposal. This thought has been put in a number of ways by students of the problem of media. "Without the mass media," Eric Barnouw declares, "teacher and student cannot adequately deal with a world of growing complexity. But the mass media cannot do the teacher's work." Parker, Barry, and Smyth remark somewhat acidly that there is really nothing "magic" about the media; and they can do nothing "to add appeal or interest to the clergyman who cannot inspire people in person or in the pulpit." [16]

We must remember that the apologists wrote before mass communication became part of man's cultural equipment. If we turn to the first great religious movement to arise in the era of mass communications, however, we find that this movement's very success is bound integrally with the development of one mass medium—the printing press. Although Martin Luther and other leaders of the Reformation continued to speak of "oral" preaching, they began to depend, in fact, on the printed word. While the words spoken in the pulpit or market place could reach at best but a few hundred hearers,

> the tracts poured forth from the Wittenberg presses, the "flying leaves" (*Flügschriften*) carried the teachings of Luther and Melanchthon to many thousands, and it was through the influence of these "winged words" (*epea pteroenta*) that the revolt developed into a revolution.[17]

The policy of the old papal system of sacramental authority had been oral instruction in the Scriptures to an illiterate laity. For fifteen centuries the faithful "had accepted their entire intellectual sustenance at the hands of the priest." For the ordinary Christian Luther's stress on the priesthood of all believers made a new demand: self-determination of one's religious belief based on personal confrontation with the Scriptures. This confrontation could be effected only where the reformers could rely on a mass-produced and mass-circulated written word.

The modern media cannot in themselves add personal appeal, but on the other hand they are not to be blamed if too much of our churchly communication is impersonally and programmatically conceived in the first place. Though some of these media—especially the electronic ones—have weaknesses that further minimize the personal element in communication, we must not confuse these effects with our own deleterious passion for institutional thinking. The latter separates us from Justin and Tertullian more decisively than our usage of mass media does.

We may confirm this conclusion by observing that even the apostle of inwardness, Soren Kierkegaard, finally became convinced of the necessity of using a mass medium of communication to seek a wide audience. Echoing Luther, he declares half seriously that sermons should not be preached in churches. Rather, he argues, they ought to be preached in the midst of real life, for the sake of the conflict that the gospel reveals with life as usually lived. In order to approximate preaching in the street, Kierkegaard finally decided to publish his polemical articles in a political journal, *The Fatherland.* He uses this journal not in spite of its secularist interests, but because of them; he considers it the best place to show the gospel's conflict with everyday life.

All this does not mean Kierkegaard approves of the mass media. He warns that he will continue to guard against "too much chumminess with everyone who writes some sort of a thing in a newspaper." Using the paper is his religious duty, he thinks, in order to make people take notice. The gospel must be made accessible to all, not that it is ever "an easy sort of thing." We must observe, however, that unfailingly Kierkegaard's efforts to make contact follow the pattern we have already suggested. He aims to get in touch with men to show them the *conflict* between their lives and the gospel; and he avoids the categories of "explicit religion" both in men's lives and in newspaper talk.

The church must not confuse its duty to preach with the duty of the hearer to become a Christian. "For it is one thing to work for extension in such a way that incessantly, early and late, one preaches the doctrine to all men; and it is another thing to be too hasty in permitting people by hundreds and thousands to assume the name of Christians, to give themselves out to be Christians." [18] Kierkegaard was aware that the preacher cannot withdraw from mass communication—but he was also confident that the process of coming into the Christian circle only begins at the point where mass communication stops. In the end, no doubt, personal adherence to the church is opposite to and the negation of a mass movement of any kind, and it is a reversion from mass communication to the personal categories; it is a renunciation of all common values and the placing of one's personal decision highest. Nevertheless, mass communication can be useful to the church, according to Kierkegaard, to serve the preliminary purposes of seeking the outsider and introducing him to the faith.

At any rate, let us take it as a working hypothesis that the church, in its work of reaching outsiders—people "allergic to religion"—fundamentally depends on mass communication and finds its principal point of contact through the mass media.

The personal character of second-century apologetic work depended not so much on the medium of communication as on the personal intent and the conceptions of proclamation entertained by the apologists; and the heaviest blow to personal communication in our time, by the same token, is the impersonal, official, programmatic nature of our proclamation efforts rather than the innate drawbacks of the media which may be used. Still, we shall be willing to criticize the mass media.

The Meaning of "Symbol"

Before we begin a detailed analysis of twentieth-century efforts at religious communication, we must define a crucial term which has already occurred but with which we will now be much more concerned. This is the term "symbol," a special term here.

The Difference Between Symbol and Sign

A basic distinction in linguistic analysis is that between "referential" terms on the one hand and "emotive" or "evocative" terms on the other. According to many theologians and other students of religion, the expression of religious faith is impossible without resort to the second of these types of language. Evocative language not exhausted immediately in the knowable is needed not only to permit human beings to express their own moods or emotions, but also to speak of transcendence as an essential aspect of faith. Hence the common definition of a symbol as a term or sign drawn from the known which is used to introduce the recipient of it to the unknown.

"The language of faith is the language of symbols," argues Tillich. "Faith, understood as the state of being ultimately concerned, has no language other than symbols."[19] This element of ultimate concern, or of transcendence of immediate concerns, is the difference between genuine religion and an idolatrous identification of religion with the surrounding culture. Reinhold Niebuhr says that the prophetic movement in Hebraic religion "offers an interesting confirmation of the thesis that a genuine faith in transcendence is the power which lifts religion above its culture and emancipates it from sharing the fate of dying cultures." The prophets saved Hebraic religion when the Babylonian exile "ended the Hebraic culture-religion with its center in the worship of the Temple."

By raising to a new transcendent level their interpretation of catastrophe and suffering, Niebuhr goes on, the prophets "saved the life" of Israel's religion.[20] This same distinction is important for our study of religious communication. In apologetics the terms being communicated must necessarily be able to evoke apprehension of ultimate concern or transcendent meaning which surpasses earthly fortunes, else they have no intrinsic relation to the gospel. Hence, for our purposes here, it is important to distinguish between terms which refer to *transcendence* and those which do not do so, being limited either in intent or function to empirical or logical meanings.

I propose, somewhat arbitrarily, to refer to religious terms which invoke ultimate concern, or which seek to introduce transcendence, as *symbols.* Those which refer to empirical or logical relations, I will refer to as *signs.*

Both signs and symbols, of course, function as shorthand notations, or ways of reducing complicated ideas to simple representations. They are blended in ordinary linguistic situations. The difference between them lies in the nature of what is represented.

When one is dealing with signs he is dealing with knowable quantities too complicated to carry around in the head, perhaps, but knowable in principle by various methods of problem solving. The mathematician's term "pi" is the sign of an infinitely lengthy mathematical ratio. No one has ever worked out this number exactly, for it is an irrational quantity which cannot be exactly expressed. For some of us 3.1416 is a close enough approach to the value of pi; for others, six decimal places are enough; for still others, ten decimal places are too rough an approximation. The point is that pi is a shorthand sign for a mathematical quantity which can be arrived at to any degree of accuracy we wish—to five hundred decimal places, for example.

A symbol is also a communicative entity which stands for something else. We use symbols for economy or shorthand purposes just as we do signs; but symbols are ways of communicating what is transcendent to experience. They stand for reality beyond what is here and now known. They remind us that faith takes its stand upon a series of "more thans." Man is more than cellular structure, for he is made in the image of God. Faith is more than right motive—it is the gift of God's grace. Just as signs are ways of communicating about the problems of existence, so symbols are ways of communicating about the mysteries of life.

To be sure, in the course of symbolizing, we must necessarily make use of signs. Every symbol is a sign which bears a certain meaning. Warner illustrates by the example of a dead lamb which takes on transcendent meaning when it is thought of by church people as "Lamb of God." [21] To speak of the providence of God, a symbolic way of talking, we may well refer to "chance," a sign standing for a definite mathematical notion.

A series of symbols may be collected into a myth, which we may take to be the highest form of communication of transcendence. A myth is related to its symbols as a plot is related to its characters or episodes. Myth is extended symbols, or is a story told with symbols about man's relation to transcendent reality.

The Dialogic Character of Symbols

We may conceive symbolism as consisting on the one hand of "symbols" and on the other hand of "the 'meaning' of the symbols." [22] The higher mind deals in symbols "that have no fixed reference to anything, but are like blank checks, to be filled in as required." [23] Because the symbol itself and its meaning are, so to speak, distinguishable components, the same symbol may have different meanings for different people. The religious communicator must always allow, then, for the fact that the meaning of the symbols he uses is going to be "filled in" by his recipients in accordance with their own backgrounds, needs, and surroundings.

A corollary of this "blank check" nature of symbols is that the religious communicator can make use of the symbols of his recipients in addition to those of his own background. In fact, this may be the only way he can direct his recipients to the area of meaning which *he* has in mind, for his own favorite symbol which expresses that meaning to him might express just the opposite of this meaning to his recipients. We have already seen this exchanging of symbols in our studies of apologetic method in earlier chapters.

The communicator must both conserve old symbols and constantly procure new ones. Each place and age has a style of its own, its own way of understanding the world and its problems, its own way of recognizing the mysteries of existence. On the other hand, "the minister can scarcely believe that the twentieth century, unlike all others, has transcended the limitations of time and history so that it is sufficient to itself." [24] Thus each era must be able to combine reverence to its accepted symbols with freedom of revision, else it faces "decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by useless shadows." [25]

The revision of symbols, let us note, does not mean the elimination of them. Karl Jaspers criticizes Rudolph Bultmann's program of "demythologizing" because of its suggestion that myth is an outmoded form of communication. Particular symbols and myths may have to be replaced because they cease to convey the intended meaning of their user, or any meaning at all; but myths and symbols as forms of expression cannot be got rid of. They must be interpreted by new myths—that is the way the old mythical truths may be recovered.[26]

The communicator must then be prepared to explain old symbols with new, ancient myth with modern, wherever he decides he must. Indeed, all communication partakes of this same character of symbol evoking new symbol. A symbol works in dialogue only insofar as it obtains a response in the form of some other symbol; every thought "addresses itself to another thought" and is also interpreted by that other thought.[27] Old symbols must be explained—but they can be explained only by other symbols, some of which may be new.

In seeking the outsider, we need to do much more of this "procuring" of new symbols to explain the old. If we do not do so, the old symbols may increasingly be interpreted according to the least promising possibilities of our culture:

> The symbols of the Church have become strengthless. The "word" no longer sounds through its speech. Society no longer understands it. And *vice versa* the work of society has become empty, and into its vacuum powers of the anti-divine, of the untrue and unjust, have forced their way, the very powers which it wanted to escape.[28]

When I suggest that the biblical and churchly symbols must be supplemented and explained by secular symbols, I am in effect suggesting that we bend our efforts to transfer the meaning of the biblical symbols to *secular symbols*. By the same token, our communicative efforts should also be directed at removing *secular meanings* from the traditional biblical and churchly symbols. A moment's thought, however, will show that these two tasks are inseparably interlocked. It is because the mysterious biblical symbols have declined into problem-centered *signs* that we look for secular symbols to restore appreciation of the gospel. For example, it is because hell has become a *place* and hence a scientific absurdity that we must call on psychological and psychiatric symbols of guilt and damnation; but the intent should always be to restore the depth of the biblical conception of sin. The religious communicator who believes that he can speak the biblical message by sticking only to the biblical symbols sooner or later finds his message in "slow atrophy." The symbols with which we must communicate about the gospel were not created by God in a grand moment of revelation at the beginning of the biblical era; they are continuously being created by him and used by us, even though we use them to speak about a final truth that will never become more true.

What can become a symbol in the sense in which I use the term? Anything that can be used for communication can be a symbol. Ordinarily I am thinking of language when I talk about symbols. But this term can extend to included pictorial art, three-dimensional objects, facial expressions, emotions, and a variety of other things. The only requirement is that the candidate for the status of symbol be used to convey transcendent meaning. (I do not even insist on biblical meaning, for there is a demonic realm of transcendence as well as a divine.)

Above all, we must avoid the sophisticated definition common among a few theological students, that "symbolism" consists of an arty, esoteric way of isolating the egghead in us. I would much prefer to think that religious symbols, as ways of communicating the transcendent message of the gospel, ought to be aimed at the people John Wesley writes about in his *Journal,* such plain, simple folk as these:

> Tues. 5. About noon I preached at New-Mills, to an earnest, artless, loving people; and in the evening at poor, dull, dead Stockport, not without hope that God would raise the dead.

NOTES

1. "Barriers to Communication: A Case Study," *Religious Education* (March-April, 1955), p. 121.
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3. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript, op. cit.,* p. 245, note.
4. *Ibid.,* p. 252.
5. J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Christian Approach to Islam in the Sudan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 66-67.
6. Kierkegaard, *Attack Upon Christendom, op. cit.,* p. 195.
7. Gabriel Marcel, *Le Déclin de la Sagesse* (Paris: Plon, 1954), pp. 39-40.
8. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript, op. cit.,* p. 252.
9. Soren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View,* tr. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 41.
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11. John A. Hostetler, *God Uses Ink: The Heritage and Mission of the Mennonite Publishing House After Fifty Years* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1958), pp. 98, 102.
12. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power, and Religion in a Rural Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 229. (Italics mine.)
13. *Ibid.,* pp. 251-52.
14. *Ibid.,* pp. 230-31.
15. Parker, Barry, and Smyth, *The Television-Radio Audience and Religion, op. cit.,* pp. 109, 111.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 402.
17. George Haven Putnam, *The Censorship of the Church of Rome* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906; 2 vols.), I, II.
18. Kierkegaard, *Attack Upon Christendom, op. cit.,* p. 160.

19. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), p. 245.
20. Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), p. 35.
21. Cf. W. Lloyd Warner, *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans* (Yankee City Series, No. 5 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959]), p. 455.
22. "The human mind is functioning symbolically when some components of its experience elicit consciousness, beliefs, emotions, and usages, respecting other components of its experience. The former set of components are the 'symbols' and the latter set constitute the 'meaning' of the symbols. The organic functioning whereby there is transition from the symbol to the meaning will be called 'symbolic reference.' " Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p. 9.
23. Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings* (Cambridge, Mass.: Technology Press of M.I.T., 1956), p. 258.
24. Samuel Miller, "The Evolution of Religion," *The Saturday Review*, Nov. 14, 1959, p. 70.
25. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
26. Jaspers, *Myth and Christianity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17. Jaspers does praise Bultmann's project of demythologization in that it denounces "reification," i.e., the hardening of communication about transcendence into objective accounts.
27. W. B. Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1952), p. 122.
28. Tillich, *The Interpretation of History*, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-39.

CHAPTER V

CAN WE TALK DIRECTLY ABOUT RELIGION TO THE OUTSIDER?

In the last chapter we seemed to come to the end of a chain of hopeful reasoning about the possibilities for Christian communication. In Chapter II we had discovered good theological reason for speaking to the outsider *as an outsider*, provided we make connection in a way that shows up the conflict between his outsider's view of things and the biblical view of things. Then in a look at second-century apologetics (Chapter III) we found that early proclaimers like Justin Martyr and Tertullian went successfully about just this task, using secular language to convey biblical insights.

In Chapter IV, however, we found exceedingly complex problems confronting our attempts to speak to the modern outsider. One of these problems arises when we attempt to use conventional, explicit religious symbols with the outsider; he may not take them seriously. Another problem arises from the fact that we seem to rely on mass media, through necessity, setting up an impersonal barrier between us and the outsider.

Now our task is an obvious one. We must face up to these disturbing problems. We must examine our everyday religious communication, *especially the kinds that utilize conventional symbols via the mass media to make contact with the outsider.* We must ask, in the light of the doubts we have raised, what happens to the message of the church when it is transmitted by these means.

The mass media devote a surprising amount of their content to reproduction of the explicit symbols of religion. Here are some examples taken at random from the newspapers.

"Dalewood Church Boiler Explodes," reads a headline in the *Nashville Banner.*

When a minister's wife died of cancer about ten o'clock one Sunday morning, her grief-stricken husband mounted his pulpit and preached as usual. "Tragedy Fails to Still Minister's Message," was the resulting headline.

"First Baptist WMU to Observe Week of Prayer," reads a front-page story in a small-town weekly newspaper.

The one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* elicited much comment and preaching from churchmen. The *New York Times* reported on the sermon of a rabbi who declared: "God is the only missing link in the annals of modern science."

Another account in the same issue of the *Times* told of a Roman Catholic priest's response to an attack on organized religion by Julian Huxley: "I refuse to admit there is a real conflict in terms of head-on opposition between science and religion."

Meanwhile, some newspapers were carrying a syndicated column by the evangelist, Billy Graham, which advised: "You don't need to make yourself suffer. Christ did that for you! You don't even need to reproach yourself. Christ took your reproach upon Calvary."

We could duplicate this performance by studying any of the other modern mass media. If we turned to films, we could speak of *The Ten Commandments, Samson and Delilah, Martin Luther*—all of which deal with the explicit symbols of biblical and churchly religion. If we turned to television we could talk of *Frontiers of Faith* and Oral Roberts' healing-evangelism program, televised nationally, and of the dozens of local stations which invite clergymen to conduct televised devotional services or which televise worship services. We could mention such radio programs as "The Lutheran Hour," "America for God Hour," the "Hour of Decision" (Billy Graham) and the "Old-Fashioned Revival Hour." Each is a complex of accepted religious symbols.

These symbols are not all of the same strength, and not all are reproduced in the media for the same purposes. The story about the church boiler explosion was a part of the day's run-of-the-mill news and had a religious reference—the symbol of the church as a building—only by accident. Billy Graham's syndicated column, however, purports to do religious good among its readers. A televised worship service presumably aims at bringing an encounter with God into the homes of viewers. Certainly the "Old-Fashioned Revival Hour" has that goal; it is the aim of the preacher, at least, if not of the radio stations' managements.

According to the theories of apologetics we have been exploring, most of this reproduction of the church's explicit symbols is a delusion and snare. We have already noticed the theory of Kierkegaard to the effect that Christianity cannot be discussed by formal Christian symbols among the unchurched people of "Christendom." The point of contact for seeking the outsider cannot be made through the accepted symbols of Christianity.

The Protestant theologian Paul Tillich has applied a variation of this theory to the mass media. Although he has appeared himself on television to discuss his theological views, he has expressed pessimism that such media are really proper agencies for the communication of the word of God.

When we utilize mass communications media to proclaim the Christian message, says Tillich, we fall into a "great fallacy." This is the assumption that "symbol and myth are parts of the same world in which we move daily in time and space." His objection to the media is summed up in one terse sentence: "The first thing which the communication of the gospel demands is to show that symbols are symbols and not stories which could be reported by a *Times* photographer and reporter." [1]

The best way for us to see what Kierkegaard and Tillich are getting at in these strictures is to examine (on a modest scale, to be sure) the use of religious symbols in our mass media. For simplicity, we may break this undertaking into two separate inquiries: (1) the use made by the media *at their own initiative* of religious symbols; (2) the use made of the mass media by church groups in an effort to communicate the Christian faith *beyond the church community* itself. The first of these inquiries will occupy us in this chapter and the next. The second of these inquiries is our subject for Chapter VII.

Secular Communicators and Christian Symbols

To explore the use of Christian symbols by secular communicators we may concentrate on the figure of the religious journalist, especially in the role of "religious reporter" or "religious news editor" of the daily newspaper.

By closely considering the work of only one type of secular communicator I do not mean to minimize the differences among the various media. In the approach to religion, newspapers differ from the electronic media in several particulars. For example, the press has ordinarily preferred to use communicators of its own employ and training to write about religion in the news, whereas radio and television have commonly reproduced religious symbols by offering time to communicators from the churches. To illustrate: The Associated Press employs a religion writer who produces features out of his own talents, whereas television has been more likely to settle for an optical embrace of, let us say, Billy Graham or officials of the National Council of Churches. There is no need to push this difference too far, however, since newspapers print an amazing quantity of Sunday-school lessons and syndicated religious columns (Billy Graham's "My Answer," for example), all preserved remarkably in their original ecclesiastical formats; and the electronic media, conversely, are becoming more and more influential, technically, in the councils of the churches on which they rely for talent.

Newspapers are better adapted for reproducing the rational, complex content of religious ideas, whereas the pictorial media—television, films—are better adapted to portrayal of events in a graphic, dynamic way. Since we are more interested at the moment in seeing what content is conveyed than in examining the dramatic possibilities of religious symbols, we should begin with the newspaper.

The Religious Journalist

The religious reporter, church editor, or religious news editor has become a fixture in the city room of the daily newspaper. In Nashville, Tennessee, both of the local daily newspapers employ church editors. When I formerly served as public relations director for a learned society of biblical scholars, I regularly mailed news releases to more than sixty such daily newspaper employees—and a really complete list of those reporters and editors who devote a substantial amount of their time to religious news would contain three or four times that many names. More than four hundred men and women serve as "church or religious news editors of American daily papers and the news magazines and news agencies," we are informed by Roland E. Wolseley, a Syracuse University professor who is probably this country's leading authority on religious journalism.[2]

These journalists and their colleagues in other phases of religious journalism render a vast amount of service to the churches as well as to their employers and the advertisers. The latter are likely to appreciate the tone of a publication which includes a liberal amount of reverent reading matter in the columns of text that surround their advertisements. But what, from the *church's* point of view, is the nature of service which the religious journalist renders? Exactly what is implied, for example, in the following description by Wolseley of the opportunity open to the religious journalist who writes for a secular publication?

> The chance to reach the unchurched is far greater since secular publications and secular broadcasting are seen and heard by persons of many views and all attitudes toward religions. In other words, the evangelistic opportunities are greater here. . . . It is no exaggeration to say that any one religious article in [*The Reader's Digest*] has more influence on more people in general than any one hundred ordinary articles in all the church press put together.[3]

Let us analyze the claim made for the religious journalist here, considering it from the point of view of the church movement or group which is interested in winning the unchurched to Christian faith. According to Wolseley the religious journalist has means through the secular press to "reach the unchurched." He has "evangelistic opportunities." He is thus taken to be a kind of proclaimer of the gospel, someone who seeks to witness to outsiders.

The additional claim that the religious journalist can influence large numbers of people "in general," however, includes some functions which are supplementary to the evangelistic or apologetic one. He can help people not only by bringing them to Christian faith, but also by introducing them to the staff services which the church renders—for example, the Christian education program, the fellowship supper. He can function as a promoter of the institutional church; and by influencing people, he can presumably get them to do such things as contribute to the church budget or swell the attendance—all whether he succeeds in "converting" a single soul or not. He can, finally, serve as an entertainer or informer, telling people about the work of the church, and thus interesting them or informing them in some way, whether they actually attend the church and become adherents of its message or not.

We can say then that the secular religious journalist may possibly conceive of his job as fulfilling any of the following functions on behalf of the church and the unchurched people to whom he speaks:

1. He is an apologist for the Christian faith.
2. He is a broker of public welfare in virtue of his ability to introduce unchurched people to the staff services rendered by the church (not including proclamation of the word, which is included under the first point).
3. He is a promoter of the institutional church.
4. He is an informer or entertainer, telling people things they want to know about religion even when they do not become involved in any of the ways listed above.

In addition to these services the religious journalist also serves his employer and indirectly his employer's advertisers, but these functions are not at issue for the moment.

In this examination of the religious journalist we are concerned only with the first of these claims. No one can possibly dispute the services which the religious journalist renders the church and the unchurched as a broker of public welfare, as a publicity man or promotional agent on behalf of the institutional church, or as an informer or entertainer. The question remains, however: Is the religious journalist really an *evangelist* or *apologist?* Is he a spokesman for the Christian faith who has the object of proclaiming the gospel to the unchurched?

Let us investigate, first by considering the usual kind of stories which the religious journalist writes for newspaper publication.

Immediately—and, I suppose, by common consent—we can eliminate much of this material. An item announcing the appointment of a new pastor for the First Community Church has no proclamatory, kerygmatic, or theological content whatever. It is partly promotion for the church and the new pastor; it is partly worthwhile information for the community, in the same category with the weather report or the society page; and it is partly a way of comforting the religiously inclined who are numbered on the newspaper's subscription list. Such stories, as Wolseley puts it himself, involve "the application of the principles and techniques of journalism to the world of religion." They involve that and nothing more. They do not involve, we may say, any inquiry into the religious predicament of the recipient of the communication, nor the putting forward of a point of conflict by which the recipient's plight is measured against the Christian gospel.

At once we see a gulf opening between the utterances of Justin Martyr to the Greeks and the religious journalist's material. This same analysis, in fact, applies to all religious news stories of a predominantly "objective" character—announcements of special programs, accounts of building projects, reports on membership increases. Religious journalism at this level is communication *about* religion, but it is not communication *of* the Christian message to outsiders. Indeed, neither Wolseley nor any thoughtful religious journalist would claim the status of proclamation for such material.

Yet we are not merely belaboring the obvious. It is not the subject matter of a religious news story which makes it "objective" and "nonconfessional." It is rather the attitude of the writer; it is journalism's time-honored doctrine that the news must be reported with objectivity. The religious journalist, regardless of his personal state of grace, is still a journalist. To write about religion in the mass media requires first of all "the professional approach of the competent reporter," declares George Dugan, religion editor of the *New York Times*. Everything else about the reporter's qualifications is secondary, according to Dugan—"including theology." Dugan commends to theological seminaries the ideal of teaching down-to-earth courses in news gathering and writing, but he warns that any such course "should not be taught by a theologian." Instead it should be given "by a practical newspaperman with many years of experience in journalism." [4]

As we can now see, the standards of professional journalism require the reporter, when he concentrates on the subject of religion, *not* to function as a believer. "Ideally, his account is as objective as he can make it," says a Columbia University journalism teacher, R. T. Baker, describing the religious journalist's job. The journalist vis-à-vis religion finds himself with a job like that of the historian and anthropologist rather than that of the preacher or apologist. "The workings of God in history can never be known if the history itself is obscured." [5]

When a *New York Times* reporter shows up at an annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature anxious to file a lengthy story, his goal is not to advance the spread of kerygma. The close alliance between this kind of religious writing and the recording of current history is pointed up by a year-end issue of the *Mobile* (Alabama) *Press-Register* which I now have before me. Among the "roundup" stories is one carrying this four-column head: "New Churches, Expansion of Many Highlighted 1959 Religious Scene." The only kind of "decision" required to write this story was the judgment about which religious events of the year rated most highly on the newsman's scale of magnitude and interest.

The religious journalist finds his calling as an objective historian of religion, which is to say, in Kierkegaard's categories, as a nonreligious historian of religion. Communication in the sense of religious proclamation means existing *within* that which one communicates; he cannot communicate it by standing outside, though he may communicate something else that is deceptively similar.[6] In the same way we can add that the religious journalist, when he does not take into account the predicament of the recipient of his communication, does not function as a Christian communicator, but only as an informer who de-emphasizes the religious importance of what he is saying. In apology there is a point of contact, we must recall, which consists of the recipient's deepest need: this need is to be first understood by the proclaimer and then reduced to a contradiction of the Christian message. Even if somehow the religious journalist could be aware of the predicaments of those he writes for, journalism's standards of objectivity would not permit him to recognize these predicaments as points of contact.

We do not have to resort to the rarefied atmosphere of existentialism to find expression of the problems about objectivity in the news. Journalism's propensity for avoiding either side of a religious controversy is inexcusable, says Sevellon Brown III, editor of the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*. Even if readers complain angrily and advertisers grow restive, newspapers have the duty to express themselves with some passion on significant questions, including the specifically religious ones.[7] Such pleas are put forward by good journalists not to turn newspapers into organs of apologetics, but rather to make of them honest critics on the editorial pages. So, we are left no closer to achieving permission for the religious journalist to commit himself when he writes. As long as he is a reporter, he will no doubt have to remain detached from his subject matter. He can have faith, but in print he cannot evince it.

If the religious writer's purpose should be to testify, he immediately runs head-on into the conflicting principle of journalism which says that the reporter may *not* testify. We must indeed put a serious qualification on Wolseley's statement that the religious journalist has "evangelistic opportunities." Wolseley himself, when he is writing consciously of this conflict, resolves it by settling in favor of the canons of journalism. The religious writer is by function a propagandist or evangelist, he admits. But this subjectivity he treats as a weakness which "goes a long way to explain what is wrong with so much writing on religion."

Wolseley, Dugan, and Baker have made the wise, right decision in rejecting evangelistic performance for professional objectivity as a mark of the religious journalist's competence. They are also right in thinking that a great deal of poor journalistic theory is expounded in seminaries and practiced by religious writers, especially by divines who have had little contact with the commercial media. They are right, however, because their commitments are to the standards of commercial journalism and not to the standards of religious proclamation.

Our conclusion, then, must be something like this. Journalism that attempts to present the explicit symbols of Christian religion gravely risks falling short of an authentically religious character, whatever its manifest content. True discourse of ultimate concern is possible only when the communicator is *fully committed* to the consequences of the communication, including the risks one always takes when he makes a decision in favor of his content. To put it bluntly, religious journalism would not become apologetic or evangelistic in character even if every third sentence were "Jesus saves." When journalism takes over symbols from Christianity to be disseminated according to the standards of journalism and not of Christian proclamation, it thereby dissipates the transcendent, sacred, or unconditioned character of these symbols.

We could have chosen a pictorial medium of communication instead of the newspaper, and this same conclusion would have become evident. For example, the motion picture version of

The Ten Commandments represents an attempt to present certain biblical symbols as entertainment, involving the use of techniques developed by the entertainment industry rather than by past proclaimers of biblical symbols. In color, the burning bush becomes a spectacular curiosity of physics instead of a means of conveying the biblical notion of the unapproachability of God. Another biblical film, *Solomon and Sheba*, illustrates almost perfectly the process of transformation of scriptural symbols into anthropological signs. The visit of the queen of Sheba to Solomon is concisely summed up in only thirteen verses of biblical text (I Kings 10:1-13, retold by the Chronicler in II Chronicles 9:1-12). The "affair" between Solomon and the queen is only hinted at, and in less than a full verse at that: "And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired" (I Kings 10:13a). In the film version, however, this allusion is "generously translated into two hours of full-color, wide-screen lust, in which all of Solomon's love affairs are lumped into one."[8] The symbol of Solomon's ill-spent finitude no longer opens up the biblical reality of divine judgment, but at most reveals the willingness of Hollywood to say something formally condemnatory about something it palpably thinks well of as subject matter. When Hollywood finally arrives at this willingness to condemn, it is "portrayed judgment" rather than "shared judgment"[9]—which is only another way of saying that the divine symbol has become a human sign because the bearer does not "participate" in its final meaning. Thus the symbols of biblical faith in a Hollywood film may be put forward minus their proper propulsive power, which is the ultimate concern of the communicator; instead, they become prodigious optical illusions. While the movie-maker is under no obligation—as is the journalist—to practice objectivity in reporting, he is under exactly the same inability to identify commitment and symbol.

The Feature Writer

Religious journalists sometimes try to answer these criticisms of their noninvolvement or nonparticipation in symbols by resorting to the "feature story." By this device the ordinary rules of objective reporting may be temporarily suspended. For example, the most important fact, ordinarily placed at the beginning of a news story, may be delayed to the end in the feature. The style of the feature is more informal. The writer is relatively more free to take sides and express an opinion. Yet the feature story is still professional journalistic writing—which means, after all, that it cannot give the writer much more leeway in personal affirmation than he has in the ordinary inverted-pyramid news story. In the last analysis, the feature is another way of confining the writer, because in it the dead-pan style of writing is replaced as a rule by an equally rigid, jocular style of nonobjective writing. The alternative available in the feature has become a uniformity itself. When objectivity goes by the boards in the feature type of story, a tone of happy satisfaction with the material, just as rigid and impersonal, becomes the standard. The feature story prepared in this way is frequently designed to inspire and uplift the masses, no matter what its subject matter. When the subject matter of the feature is explicitly religious, the end product is often a vacuous sentimentality. (I am leaving out of consideration some less popular genres of feature, such as the hard-mouthed, cynical-toned crusading feature on the ills of society. The press has yet to venture the irreverent tone of this variety of feature in any wholesale way on religious subject matter.)

It may be granted at once, of course, that some religious features written by good, careful writers avoid a crass sentimentality and evince writing that is inspiring in a nonpejorative sense. Nevertheless, such communication as this, in spite of its reverent tone and technical effectiveness, tends to represent a transformation of transcendent religious symbols into localized, humanistic signs. Let us consider the type of journalistic feature which combines the best qualities of modern media of mass communication: the full-length pictorial feature printed in the pages of a general magazine.

In its issue of December 17, 1956, *Life* ran a ten-page pictorial feature called "The Seven Sacraments." Here was the feature writer's comment on baptism: "Water is used to confer the sacrament, to wash away all previous and original sin (derived from Adam's sin)." We may overlook the fact that this explanation of baptism rests strictly on Roman Catholic theology (Martin Luther, for example, declared that baptism could no more "wash away" original sin than a razor can shave a man so he will never need another shave); and that its terminology, i.e., description of baptism as a "sacrament," immediately rings false to many sectarian Protestants. These are details. What we need to investigate is the gross symbolic meaning of this statement, coming as it does in feature-story form.

In the mouth of a priest, this statement would have the full weight of the priest's acceptance behind it. In the hands of a feature writer, the same statement becomes an interesting description of the way the human mind works. In the mouth of a priest, the sentence on baptism tells what the priest believes about God; in the typewriter of a feature-story writer, the sentence tells what the writer has learned about Christians. Thus there is inevitably a downgrading of the religious reference of such statements in the feature story. Despite the feature-story writer's happy approval of baptism as practiced everywhere, his words are not those of a participant in this sacrament, but those of an observer of the human scene insofar as human beings practice a phenomenon describable as baptism.

When the bearer of a symbol ceases to participate in its "reach" beyond human arrangements, what he bears has ceased to be a symbol. It has become a mere sign, the significance of which is immediately exhausted in the realm of anthropology.

We may notice this same tendency even more graphically in the pictures which accompanied the feature story. The two-page spread on Communion showed pictures of a two-year-old infant receiving bread and wine in a spoon from an orthodox priest. It showed a New York society matron, flawlessly dressed, kneeling self-consciously at an altar rail in a Lutheran church, drink-ing wine from a chalice. It showed a woman of another denomination taking a Communion wafer on her tongue. It showed Presbyterians remaining stolidly in their seats while the elders came to the congregation with the elements. It showed a Catholic priest facing the altar, about to drink the transubstantiated wine from the chalice.

What is the meaning of Communion as portrayed in this way? Once again, we have a photographic report on variations in human customs, rather than an affirmation of faith. The gross effect of the two-page spread is to point up interesting differences among Christians in their Communion customs; but the net effect is to omit affirming what the writer or photographer believes about God's ways with men.

The text supports the thrust of the pictures toward popular anthropology; that is, it tends to point out what is sightworthy or notable about Communion customs rather than what is sightworthy or notable about Christian faith. "The Eastern orthodox have a unique custom, confirming infants and giving them communion immediately after baptism." Here the interest is centered on something unique about the Eastern Orthodox rather than something unique about God's grace. To be sure, the spread concludes with a statement that all Christians everywhere intend to say the same thing—to show their faith in the grace of God through Christ, despite their variations in Communion practice. This is still not an inner affirmation of the meaning of Communion; it remains a statement about human customs in the realm of religion, inflated slightly with the beneficent tone of approval that runs through virtually all varieties of the feature story.

Thus the explicit Christian symbols when purveyed in "feature" format may become in net effect signs of human interest rather than conveyors of transcendent meaning. Too often such effort "substitutes devotion for the divine deed." [10] It shows the recipient a mirror image of his own religiosity.

Now we can put in succinct terms the difference between the religious journalist and the apologist. The religious journalist corresponds to the Gnostic of Tertullian's day, for he takes the explicit religious symbols—the sacraments, for example—and explains them in secular terms. The apologist, on the other hand, does the diametric opposite. He takes secular symbols—the old Greek philosophic notion of "Logos," for example—and explains them in biblical terms. The net effect of the religious journalist's activity is to secularize sacred symbols; the net effect of the true apologist's activity is to sacralize secular symbols.

Do I claim that all religious feature writing has only a humanistic outcome? No. I do assert, however, that by and large religious journalism at most attains the level of devotion rather than of faith. It is overwhelmed with the seriousness of getting the facts.

Bias of the Medium

Up to this point we have admittedly been concerned more or less with the impersonal genres of religious journalism—the news story, the feature article, the pictorial spread. Even where such articles are by-lined they ordinarily represent an effort by the newspaper or magazine itself to report, inform, entertain, or inspire. Do the same criticisms we have made of this material apply to more personal types of religious journalism? What about the *Reader's Digest* religion article, in which the writer purports to speak of *his own faith* rather than to describe religion as a collection of interesting customs? What about the syndicated columns of men like Fulton Sheen and Billy Graham, in which the writers deliberately set out to function as apologists for Christian faith?

It can be argued, after all, that the reporter's summary of a sermon is not intended as apology and hence is free of the criticism which we have just leveled at religious journalism. But what if the sermon itself, signed by the minister, appears in the newspaper? Here we have to do, not with an impersonal report by an observer who does not identify himself with the explicit religious symbols he puts forward, but rather with a confession from the writer that he does believe the message conveyed by the symbols.

Let us consider, for example, a recent syndicated release by the evangelist Billy Graham. In his column "My Answer," he responded at some length to the following questions posed by "C. L. B.," a reader: "Is Satan, the arch-enemy of my soul, back of all my sickness and disease? Why can't I get the victory over this problem? Will you kindly help me?"

In answering this question Graham makes use of and commits himself to the biblical meaning of a number of explicitly Christian symbols, such as Satan, Job, the suffering of the righteous, the Bible itself, the healing power of grace.

Graham declares to the reader:

> Though Satan is certainly the author of much suffering in the world, it would be false to say that he is responsible for all of it. . . . Many a man has to be on the flat of his back before he can look up into the face of God. . . . True, God can heal us if he wills, but the great miracle is to give us Grace to bear what He does not see fit to remove from us.

Here, at last, we are seemingly in a different world from the writings of the ordinary, noncommitted religious journalist. Here in Graham's answer to a doubting reader we may think we find apologetics properly speaking: an attempt to win the outsider to Christian faith. Moreover, it is an attempt which makes direct use of the explicit symbols of Christian faith.

But what is the content of these symbols? "Content corresponds to attitude," Tillich reminds us,[11] and we have already seen how the uncommitted attitude of ordinary religious journalists allowed the content to become mere devotional material. Now, however, there is no question as to the attitude of the writer. Graham's attitude—let us concede and be done with it—is one of commitment, and the content of the symbols is affirmation or commitment to the biblical message—so far as Graham is concerned.

But the content of symbols is susceptible to more attitudes than the one of the writer who uses the symbols. The content of a symbol is affected by at least two other considerations. One is the capability of the medium through which the symbol is conveyed to reflect the author's attitude of commitment. The other is the environment constituted by all the signs and symbols within the medium—that is, the degree to which other symbols being conveyed by the medium affect the content of the Christian symbols.

We must then ask in the second place not only whether the *writer* is committed, but also whether the medium in which he imbeds his symbols is "transparent" enough to reflect this attitude of the writer. Otherwise, the commitment he puts into the symbol when he forges his statement might be obscured by the inability of the medium to reflect this particular kind of attitude or commitment. To use a metaphor, the medium can have enough "background noise" representing its own countercommitments that the writer's state of commitment is not communicated to those who read his words in print.

In Graham's case the "medium" of his words is the process of syndication and the final appearance of his printed column in the pages of the daily newspaper. We must ask whether the daily newspaper and other mass media are capable of reflecting the religious commitment of men like Billy Graham whose words are reproduced in them.

Once again, we must remind ourselves of the purpose of mass media. The news columns serve to inform, educate, and entertain. The advertising columns serve to sell commodities and ideas, cultivate desires in the psyches of the readers, and offer goods which will answer to these desires. Thus, the communicative techniques evolved by the mass media—the very ones often used to write up Christianity, in fact—are ordinarily intended in some way to promote or sell something to which the medium has finally only an *external* relation. When the mass media sweep up a piece of apologetics—no matter how committed the author may have been to the symbols in it—they tend to transform it into a salable commodity (salable in the sense of "readable," if in no other way).

Billy Graham's comments on grace, for example, no matter how closely identified with his own commitments, become put forward in his newspaper column as reliable observations by a spokesman who stands in external relation to the newspaper itself. The newspaper does not endorse Mr. Graham's conception of grace; rather, it presents his column as reliable comment by an authority on the meaning of grace. In other words, the column is a salable religious commentary, and the newspaper commits itself to the reputation of the author rather than to the symbols. It makes no endorsement of Mr. Graham's teachings.

When Mr. Graham's column of explicit religious symbols is imbedded in the medium of the modern daily newspaper, then we may say that the medium remains "opaque" to the symbols, that it does not pass the attitude of Mr. Graham along with the bare symbols because its own attitude is not one of testimony to the symbols.

We may reach the same conclusion by another route, and that is by considering the commercial status of Mr. Graham's column. The syndicate sells the column to the newspapers. The newspapers run the column because it will be read. One of the criteria for the suitability of the column is its readability and appeal, its success at winning a public. Ultimately, one of the goals here (I do not claim it is the only goal) is to maintain the attractiveness of the newspaper as a medium for advertisers. On the other hand, revelation of the gospel comes always through a medium which makes room for the revelation, so to speak, by the shrinkage of its own self-interests. "Final revelation includes . . . the complete self-sacrifice of the medium to the content of revelation." [12] Self-sacrifice in the religious sense is just what the ordinary procedures of the mass media are not designed to accommodate, for religious self-sacrifice means, if not giving up worldly goods, then at least drastic reorientation of one's standards.

A related consideration is the *environment* of explicitly Christian symbols as they are conveyed through the mass media. What is the nature of the other symbols which are being conveyed at the same time? Is there any cross-influence between symbols of varying purpose and background?

Let us continue to use Billy Graham as an example, since we have already conceded that in his case written utterances represent the use of explicit Christian symbols which are identified with the personal commitment of the communicator. I have before me an issue of my local daily newspaper. Mr. Graham's syndicated column appears on page 29 (the location itself is further indication of the point we have just been discussing—the inability of the medium really to evince any commitment to the Christian symbols, or even to convey accurately the original commitment of the writer to these symbols; to be on page 29 of the *Nashville Banner* is to be buried.) Above Mr. Graham is another daily syndicated column, "Sincerely, Edan Wright." In this issue Miss Wright considers the plight of a lovelorn youth and decides that his older girl friend is just a "tramp." Just below Mr. Graham's column is a two-inch item about the theft of a pair of figurines from a fashionable suburban address. Below that is an undated "filler" which tells, for amusement only, about a Connecticut oil firm which is building a swimming pool as part of a service station. Below this filler is a one-column by two-inch jewelry store ad. The rest of the page—the seven columns to the right of the column containing the Graham piece—consists of a furniture store ad which begins "H. Brown & Co. Makes it EASY for you to give GIFTS EVERYBODY WANTS."

Mr. Graham's undoubted passion about his message is bound to be attenuated somewhat in transmission when his writings are immersed among these conflicting signs and symbols, none of which has anything to do with commitment to Christian faith. All of the cues point the reader away from the Christian message. When a nearly buried cue on page 29 points toward this message, it is likely to be received with indifference.

An even more spectacular example is the single page I have retained from an old issue of the *New York Times*. It is torn from the entertainment section and consists almost entirely of advertisements of plays and musicals then running in New York City. The only exception is a small insertion located almost in the center of the page: an advertisement of Billy Graham's crusade, then underway in New York City. The inevitable effect was to classify Mr. Graham's evangelistic event as one of the options available to New Yorkers seeking entertainment for an evening.

Again, the appearance of religious accounts on the society pages demonstrates how the environment changes the meanings of explicitly religious symbols. The headline "Grace Church Will Be Assisted by a Yule Fair," is of the same breed as other social headings in that issue: "Miss Reinmund is the Fiancee of Peter Barlow," "Brooklyn Art Sale Slated," and so on. The only visible commitment here is to the promulgation of what is socially newsworthy. And that is all, I am sure, that the *New York Times* intended to promulgate.

I have not intended to single out newspapers as the only media which present an unsatisfactory symbolic environment leading to the inundation of explicitly religious symbols. Television is, if anything, even more embarrassed at this point than the press.

We need, however, to examine the symbolic environment of television a bit more carefully. To be sure, there is no furniture ad in the next column or advice to the lovelorn just above: the television speaker is there on the screen alone. But there was a corset commercial just before he took the camera, and the moment he finishes a sneeze vaccine will be promulgated. The staging and seriousness are there for the corset and the sneeze medicine as well as for the gospel. In fact, the svelte lady who came in view inside the corset called attention to her subject matter far more effectively than the clergyman did; and the medicinal-type gentleman who will soon be talking up the sneeze vaccine can muster up a good bit more seriousness, urgency, and sincerity than our relatively untrained clergyman can.

Not long ago television was the subject of a scandal involving rigged quiz shows. Poetry critic John Ciardi of the *Saturday Review* concluded that this electronic medium was to be condemned, not for hoaxing or swindling the American people, but rather for its pretenses at sincerity:

> TV has specialized in offering a phony sincerity for sale. Switch off the sound track of your set and watch a cigarette salesman at work: if you take the pack out of his upheld left hand and substitute a prayer book, you may well believe from his expressions and gestures that he is conducting religious services. A TV pitchman, as required by the sponsor and the medium, is a man who can be sincere about anything on demand. So far at least, it has been no part of his professional morality to care what he is being sincere about.[13]

If television is sincere about everything, or seems to be, it can do nothing special for the Christian faith—except treat it like all the other commodities about which it is sincere. Let us not overlook the fact that there are many dignified, well-intentioned religious radio and television programs in which the explicit symbols of Christian faith are identified with the commitment of the originators: church services, presentations by the National Council of Churches, and so on. In themselves, many of these programs may be said to offer proclamation in Christian depth. Yet they are part of a *milieu* of communication in which the stresses are all foreign to the notion of divine grace or judgment.

Successful performance in mass media requires an ability to compete on the terms of the opposition. The type of religious program that is apt to compete most successfully with "The Price Is Right" is the kind that gives away something—healing, happiness, or a ticket to the next world. So, among the more long-lived religious offerings on radio and television are hoarse-voiced evangelists, faith healers, and self-help artists. Such criteria of success as the size of the audience cannot, of course, encourage a very favorable climate for the spokesman who would make his point of contact also a point of conflict with the values of the audience. Nor can a television program ever achieve the freedom from its symbolic environment, under these circumstances, to become identified only with the commitment-state of the communicator. As a semanticist once remarked after reading an Easter editorial in *Life*, he was at a loss as to what the editors expected of him: (1) repent of materialism and accept Christ; (2) order a new Pontiac.

The point is clear enough to ordinary television viewers—a few, at least. One of them wrote to *Time*, following that magazine's censure of television for permitting quiz shows to be rigged: "After all, what the programs basically purported to dispense is entertainment—and free entertainment at that. We do not expect the gospel truth every time we turn on our sets." In this facetious reference to the gospel there is ironic truth. The daily newspaper, the television station, and all mass media have to make their way in the world by dint of their ability to sell cigarettes, baking soda, and small loans, in exchange for so much money an agate line or minute.

Every attempt, then, to proclaim explicit symbols of religion in the mass media, whether by religious journalism or otherwise, runs the risk of superficiality. However, we must recall that religious journalism and all of the other modes of communication we have touched on here may render services of another kind to the church. The religious journalist, for example, can be a promoter of the church's institutional welfare. Unlike the apologists of the second century, however, he cannot really engage in seeking the outsider, since he must, instead of testifying, point to facts which do not entail his concern. Indeed, there is some reason to think that the purveying of religious content by the detached methods of commercial journalism and advertising can result only in the further dehumanization of the consumer of communication.

Results of Explicit Christian Symbols

The reader will perhaps note that we have not yet touched on Kierkegaard's chief objection to the use of explicit Christian symbols as a means of reaching the outsider. All we have said so far is that the "previous commitments" of religious journalism and other communication via mass media present an insuperable problem to the conveyance of explicit religious symbols. For these symbols, when they do not command the ultimate concern of the transmitters of them, become something less than true symbols. Lack of commitment at any point along the line, either with the originator of the communication or with the medium itself (or, as we shall see, with the recipient), robs the symbols of their religious efficacy. They become instead of divine symbols mere signs—containers of information or vehicles of entertainment rather than conveyors of the biblical attitude.

Kierkegaard's point, on the other hand, had to do almost entirely with the fate of these symbols once they entered the consciousness of the *recipient*. In a land of trivialized Christianity, Kierkegaard believed, the reception of accepted Christian symbols, far from awakening dead faith, would only serve to render it more self-satisfied and dormant than ever. The public is already willing enough to *discuss* Christ; the average man is a "twaddler," happy enough to have Christian symbols addressed to him so he can admire them at length. What is needed, however, is conviction of the need to follow Christ. That is what the nominal symbols cannot give; inevitably they become mere confirmers of the twaddler's illusions about himself.

Inability to Hear

This theory of Kierkegaard's is easily confirmed by the most casual examination of American behavior during the Christmas season.

An Associated Press religion writer asserts that the resurgence of explicit religious motifs on Christmas cards in 1959 "could be an indication that Christ, who is the reason for it all, is making a comeback in Christmas." He tells of a drive "to convert Christmas cards from secularism" which was begun in 1947 by the National Council of Churches. The Council was soon joined by a "Keep Christ in Christmas Committee," which dispenses seals to go on the backs of Christmas card envelopes bearing the motto "Keep Christ in Christmas" encircled with holly wreaths. We could also mention in any list of the allies of this movement innumerable bakeries, insurance firms, and mortuaries who purchase billboard space deploying this motto and their own company name as well—both in large, sacred-looking letters.

It is necessary to point out what appears to me to be the baneful result of this approach to restoring Christ's prominence in the public eye. Let us consider the fate of Christmas cards, for example, which bear arms in the fight to "put Christ back in Christmas." Suppose I receive a Christmas card which attempts to do this. It is from Jackson, a friend of mine. If I reflect on the meaning of the card at all—and I am not likely to—I will probably think: "Good old Jackson—his heart's in the right place." This thought, which is the fruit the card bears for me, has little relation to the Incarnation. It is, if anything, a subtle denial of the Incarnation, because it tells me that good old Jackson—who makes it to church at Easter, but scarcely any other time—is coming to the rescue of an out-of-touch God. But let us suppose that I advance from this warm feeling about my friend Jackson to sober consideration of the religious message which he has tendered me on his card. In this case I say to myself: "Surely Jackson doesn't think I'm not a Christian! I have it—he had a hundred of these printed and I got one because it's all he had. I have no doubt, of course, that there are others on his list who really ought to take his message seriously." *But not me*. I think this way because the Christmas card is at best a watered-down means of social communication, not a device for proclamation; and when my friends use it to convey religious sentiments, they must of necessity and almost by definition choose sentiments *flattering* to me. Jackson would never think of sending me a Christmas card which seriously warns me: "Thou art the man!" any more than he would greet me on the street by saying: "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for not reading your Bible."

The upshot of this is that a Christmas card which announces the need for Christ can in the nature of things *never* announce the need for a *judging* Christ. It can only refer to the need for remembering all the good things, sentimentally speaking, which we associate with Jesus and his birthday—the pleasant things which we see fit to remember mutually as friends. Consider, for example, the Christmas card placed in *Life* by an insurance company for all its friends and customers: The Holiday Season, it begins, is a time when families come together and reaffirm "well-loved customs and fundamental beliefs." So far, so good—if the "fundamental beliefs" include everything, let us say, in the Creed. But that is just the point. The only fundamental beliefs the company can seem to think of are the *pleasant ones*—the ones that confirm the illusion of Christianity without making a single demand of the recipient. What are some of these beliefs, as the company lines them up? That Christmas is "a time of pride and pleasure." That it is a time of "gratitude" for blessings, "compassion" for the unfortunate, "hope" for a better world. That it is a time of "faith" in our ability "to grow and to build" (an importation of secular ambitions into the sacred symbols, as the next phrase shows: "For our way of life is a good one.").

It is now common practice for downtown department stores to sooth Christmas shoppers with nominally Christian Christmas hymns; but the message of some of these hymns, if the audience could "hear" it, would be *not* to buy—at least not the things being sold in most of the department stores at Christmas time! The words of "O Come, All Ye Faithful" virtually order Christians to turn away from such tinsel as is on sale at Yuletide in the chic stores; but most Christians who hear this hymn over the department store public address system think of it only as encouraging them to buy—the more, the better.

This peculiar ability to receive a Christian symbol without hearing or seeing what it *means* typifies the Christianized public. No amount of "simplification of theology" or "writing the message in plain language" or "putting Christ back into Christmas" verbally will overcome this symbol-deafness either, so long as the symbols are the explicit ones which already represent a dead letter in the consciousness of the recipient.

The Absence of Dialogue

In our study of the second-century apologists, we found that the effectiveness of the apologetic material depended on: (1) the ability of the apologist to make a partner out of his listener—that is, to take the recipient's own language and categories as a starting point; (2) the ability of the apologist to show that the point of contact is really a point of conflict with the gospel—to show, that is, the recipient's despair as a function of his paganism.

It may be argued that the mass media satisfy the first requirement by using specifically Christian symbols. After all, the average citizen in this country is "Christianized" or "half-Christian," and he is familiar with many of the Christian ideas. But do the mass media really make "partners" out of communicator and recipient? And do they take (2) above seriously?

Communication from one personal existence to another about the possibilities of faith entails a head-on collision of the projected symbols and the psyche of the recipient. Conveyed via the mass media, however, the symbols at best strike a glancing blow; more often, they are received by any given reader as a third person standing to the side and observing symbols intended for someone else. The "advice to the lovelorn" column in our local daily newspaper makes good reading for the idly curious—but it often amounts to woefully inadequate counseling for the parties actually involved. Religious communication in the press often has the same effect that revivalistic preaching does when the hearer is not aware that the words apply to *him*. As Charles G. Finney warned: "A man may tell you that your house is on fire in such a way as to make directly the opposite impression, and you will take for granted that it is not *your* house that is on fire." [14]

Let us recall from our definition of symbolism in the preceding chapter that Christian communication depends on a dialogue of symbols. A symbol sent must evoke a symbol in response; otherwise there is no two-way communication. Because the communicator of accepted symbols via mass media so often does not truly have conversation with his listeners—indeed, may not be able to for sheer weight of numbers—he is condemned to communicate by "harangue." But communication of the gospel is not so much a question of men's haranguing one another as it is of their hearing God in one another's presence. They are partners to one another because God is partner to all.

The more complicated the medium, the less chance it appears to have to make communicator and recipient truly partners. Gabriel Marcel objects to the use of radio because its efficient techniques make men less aware of one another; radio's very ability to let the communicator effortlessly "transcend his human condition and the limitations it entails" means that it must degrade every message by separating it from the personalities it is conveyed between.[15]

We have already considered the drawback of "objectivity" that destroys the meaning of explicitly religious symbols in such fields as religious journalism. Now it remains only to observe that this same objectivity has the additional effect of destroying any partnership or personal rapport between communicator and recipient.

In addition, the ability of the mass media to describe a point of contact as in reality a "point of conflict" must also be questioned. Wilbur Schramm, in a study of ethics in mass communication, has questioned whether radio and television are ever prepared to question the general assumptions of society. He expresses doubt that they will ever conceive that "showing man evil" is a "necessary or desirable part of helping him to be good." [16] Though Mr. Schramm avoids applying this criticism to the printed media, we must not hesitate to do so here. The reluctance of the press, as well as other mass media, to engage in discussion of the controversial side of religion has already been mentioned. Here we must observe that this reluctance is but another form of failing to apply the point of contact as a point of conflict. The mass media, by their endorsement of everyday American religious categories, are simply confirming Americans in semipaganism and elaborating the illusion of religious faithfulness.

Summary

When journalism employs specifically religious symbols, the resultant effect on the symbols is to transform their content into commercial or humanist categories and the resultant effect on the audience is to confirm trivial Christianity and to amplify illusions of faithfulness. This unfortunate result begins with the communicator to the extent that as a modern professional journalist he (unlike the classical apologist) speaks impersonally and objectively about a message that can be ultimately projected only through a personal decision in favor of it. Even if the journalist manages to commit himself to the symbols, then the media interpose to destroy the subjective meaning which the communicator intends. Finally the symbols, at the end of their trajectory, only glance off the consciousness of the recipients, for Americans have a peculiar quality of "symbol-deafness" which makes them oblivious to the transcendent overtones. The general result is to confirm semi-Christians in semi-Christianity, which is billed, however, as Christianity in earnest.

On the other hand, religious journalism and other mass media can render ancillary service to the church in such roles as historian or promoter of welfare or plant-builder. If the mass media are not suitable for apologetic work when they employ the explicit symbols of religion, perhaps they can be more effective when they avoid these symbols.

NOTES

1. "Communicating the Christian Message Today," mimeographed copy of address.
2. Roland E. Wolseley, *Careers in Religious Journalism* (New York: Association Press, 1955), p. 35.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

4. George Dugan, "Reporting Religion," in *Writing for the Religious Market*, ed. Roland E. Wolseley (New York: Association Press, 1952), p. 90.
5. Richard T. Baker, "Religion and Journalism," *Religious Education*, L (November-December, 1955), 363.
6. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*, tr. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), pp. 133-34.
7. *Time*, April 27, 1957, p. 22.
8. *Time*, January 11, 1960, p. 64.
9. *Christianity Today*, January 18, 1960, p. 331.
10. Paul Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, tr. H. Richard Niebuhr (New York: Holt, 1932), p. 57.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
12. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *op. cit.*, I, 147.
13. John Ciardi, "Exit a Symbol," *The Saturday Review*, November 21, 1959, p. 28.
14. Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* (Oberlin, Ohio: E. J. Goodrich, 1868), p. 138.
15. Marcel, *Men Against Humanity*, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
16. Wilbur Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 283.

CHAPTER VI

AN INDIRECT APPROACH TO THE OUTSIDER—THROUGH HIS ANXIETIES

In the previous chapter we saw how the explicit symbols of religion, when transmitted to the outsider by the mass media, may undergo a loss of content—or more precisely, a *substitution* of secular for Biblical content. This need not discourage us, however. After all, the outsider has to be sought with nonchurchly symbols; that is one of the first axioms of establishing a point of contact.

This being the case, we ought now to ask ourselves whether the mass media can make contact with the outsider on the level of religion through means *other* than the use of explicit religious symbols.

When we speak of the "level of religion" we do not mean, of course, mere churchgoing or the study of doctrines. We mean, rather, the deepest level of human existence—the level of existential problems, the level of "ultimate concern." When we ask whether the mass media can make contact with the outsider at the level of religion, we mean to ask whether they can establish communication with him at the level of his deepest needs and concerns.

The religious need of twentieth-century man is well expressed in the concept of *anxiety*. Caught between the lure of consumables and the limited buying power of his monthly pay check, he feels the threat of nonbeing. He readily agrees to go into debt to buy what appeals to him; thus he temporarily satisfies one anxiety—the craving to consume—by taking on another. Besieged on all sides by short-run appeals to his desires and by many conflicting versions of truth, the modern man does not know what his existence means or what will become of it. Both individuals and groups have lost faith in the long-range purposes of life. Our situation is characterized "by a profound and desperate feeling of meaninglessness." [1] Under these conditions, the anxiety that accompanies all finite existence becomes despair—especially, we might add, when the consumer is constantly at the mercy of practiced stimulators of fear.

Despair is not a necessary outcome of anxiety, however, according to Tillich. It is the result that may be expected only when the person has succumbed to his anxieties—has given in to the fear of nonbeing. But the Christian faith offers another answer. This other answer is the "New Being" which may be ours by faith in "Jesus as the Christ." Not that with this new being anxiety is banished, for all human existence necessarily includes it. Even in Jesus we can see a human life "in which all forms of anxiety are present"; yet as the Christ Jesus' existence becomes a life "in which all forms of despair are absent." So our anxiety may be turned by faith from despair to courageous response. "The question of God is the question of the possibility of this courage."

The anxiety of the modern man is obviously a promising point of contact to which the religious proclaimer may speak. For it is the nexus in the self at which damnation (despair) and salvation (courage) meet. The Christian communicator, in accordance with the principles of apology which we have explored, is obligated to portray this point of contact as in reality a point of conflict. That is, the anxiety of the modern man is to be pictured as the engine of despair for the person who does not heed the gospel; and it is to be pictured as the vehicle of courage for the man who takes God's word seriously.

Between these two possible outcomes of anxiety—despair on the one hand or courage on the other—there is an apparent third solution. This is the attempt to demonstrate how by some technical means the anxiety of the recipient may be eliminated or allayed. In advance we can designate this approach as fundamentally nonreligious; and when we find it employed, we may be certain that proclamation of the gospel is not the goal. For anxiety can never be simply obliterated, any more than the other attributes of finite human existence can be. Even if the communication which attempts to destroy anxiety is invested with explicitly religious symbols, we may be sure, nevertheless, that it is some kind of "pagan" version of faith and not the gospel which is being "proclaimed."

A variation of this non-Christian approach to anxiety is the attempt by the communicator deliberately to raise the anxiety level of his recipients so that he can then convince them that he alone possesses the secret of reducing these anxieties again. Here the communication agency, or else some technical enterprise that it represents, poses as the redeemer. The heresies of this approach, Christianly speaking, are two: one is the claim that an earthbound technical undertaking may accomplish final redemption (which only God's grace can achieve); the second is the claim that anxiety may be eliminated (instead of creatively redirected).

Anxiety takes its color from four inevitable properties of all existence: time, space, causality, and substance.[2] The media of mass communication habitually make contact with human anxieties in each of these four categories, and we may examine their practices in each with profit. We may look for each of the approaches to communication sketched above. That is, the mass media, in their approach to each of these categories may: (1) excite anxiety about the category beyond what existed—then offer an "answer" to it; (2) offer to allay already existing anxiety; (3) accept anxiety but offer a means of courageous acceptance of it; (4) equate anxiety and despair.

Time

The central category of finitude, says Tillich, is time. Human existence is transitory, and all men are aware of their steady progress through time to a point when they will not be. What is significant here is not the fear of *death* or of the *moment* of dying. That is a psychological fear and hence not as basic as anxiety about *having to die*, which hovers over every moment of one's life. Time is a category of finitude, therefore, and thus a root of anxiety in all human existence not so much because we care *when* we will die, but rather because we are anxious *at every moment* about having to die. This anxiety "permeates the whole of man's being; it shapes soul and body and determines spiritual life." [3]

The Daily Newspaper and Time

The modern daily newspaper, with its news criteria of frequency, recency, and magnitude, takes full advantage of this anxiety about time. A man's death (if he only knew) might be fifty years away; but it might come any moment, and in any of the ways that it actually did come to the newly deceased souls he reads about in his newspaper: by a stupendous airplane crash, by a flesh-wrenching automobile collision, by a canoe upset on the Fourth of July. He has made trips and will have to make trips again; the victims of yesterday's crash (which he reads about before breakfast) are the pale shadows of himself in the Sheol of his imagination. Although he knows, as he stands in the kitchen with the paper, that he is secure in all the comforts of being, he is morbidly fascinated by all of this nonbeing which is presented to him almost when it happens. Through modern journalism the news consumer is daily given a sample of what it is like not to be at all, and being or nonbeing is the most important question of his existence. Thus the disaster story has a spiritual dimension that is on a par with the sacrament of extreme unction; and the news channel, whether its managers wish it or not, has a religious function. The disaster story points to the holy because it evokes the quality of what is of ultimate concern for man. It may manifest holiness in distorted ways, but it cannot avoid the responsibility of manifesting it through affording the news consumer a view of the abyss of nonbeing, the finis toward which his anxiety in time is directed.

We could make the same analysis of radio and television, insofar as they are media of news transmission or drama. The principal "fraud" of American television is not that it pretends to be serious while dispensing only entertainment; according to Norman Cousins, it is instead "the exploitation of crime and glamourizing of violence." Our analysis seems much more appropriate to the daily newspaper and radio, however, than to television, since the latter is often thought of more as an entertainment medium than as a news medium.

When the mass media encourage the news consumer to think of his own passage through time into nonbeing, they of course stimulate an existing anxiety. Do they ever employ the other approaches to anxiety? Do they allay man's natural anxiety about time, convince him that he has no worries? Do they equate his anxiety with despair? Finally, do they ever help him make a courageous affirmation in the face of time anxiety?

Let us consider these alternative approaches one at a time. First, the approach which directly allays anxiety. To allay one's anxiety about time is to tell him he need not be concerned about his approaching end, about the prospect of nonbeing. It hardly seems possible that this could be a frequent theme of media such as the daily newspaper and radio which rely intrinsically on the inexorable passage of time for the validity of their commodity.

When we turn from news to drama, however, television offers numerous examples. Consider the possibilities inherent in a show called "The Gray Ghost," a weekly series—now off the air—depicting the successful guerilla tactics during the Civil War of Mosby's Rangers, a Confederate outfit. Since the Federal troops on this show occupy the villain's role, they of course never win. Like Indians, rustlers, hijackers, and the District Attorney on "Perry Mason," the Federals are condemned in this electronic reincarnation to lose all the battles, and to do so timelessly, for on "The Gray Ghost," Appomattox never comes. The die-hard professional Southerner (especially in this strained time of federal interference with his segregated schools) can renounce the world of time; he can live a new existence in which the South's great epochal loss to nonbeing has been erased.

Or consider the kind of advertising which attempts to build a "long-range" (i.e., time-oriented) sense of purpose into the life of the reader, beset by short-range calls on his energy and imagination. Thus a help-wanted advertisement run in the *New York Times* by a missile contractor begins: "Cut Through the Career Maze with Arma." The company's "top-level Space Age projects," the copy reads, "include basic research and long-range R & D that challenge many presently accepted concepts." Such an approach as this virtually tells the reader that he can have permanence in his being by becoming a part of the far-reaching, time-defying projects of the company.

The mass media also occasionally take the third alternative and simply equate time-anxiety with despair. This is seen in the frequent editorial on the theme that it is only a question of time until radioactive wastes kill or cripple us all. The main reliance of the mass media, however, is on the first approach to time—the stimulation of man's natural anxiety about the passage of time and the approach of nonbeing.

What we are most interested in is the *next* step. What does the news medium want to happen to the consumer at this point? Let us return to the disaster story again, which operates on the consumer's anxiety in the realm of time by evoking the fear of his approaching death. *Whether the point of contact remains a pagan entity or becomes the connecting link with faith depends on what now happens to the consumer.*

The consumer's anxiety, let us remember, is not itself sinful. Time-anxiety "belongs to the created character of being, quite apart from estrangement and sin." As such, it is balanced in a healthy society by the polar possibility, by the defiance of time with courage to face the present, even unto its ragged far edge. "Without this courage man would surrender to the annihiliating character of time; he would resign from having a present." [4] Because he does face the present, despite the knowledge he has of what time eventually has in store for him, man is, says Tillich, the most courageous of living things. With a victory over time, he can realize the highest articulation of his existence: he is able to have history. He is also able to affirm that something new can be created in history. Ultimately, because of his courageous affirmation in the face of time, "man is able to act towards something beyond his death."

Although exceptions can certainly be found, my judgment is that mass communications media usually prefer to stimulate the anxiety and leave it at that. As the mediator of uncompensated time-anxiety they are thus the bearer of a distorted account of life. Mass communication falls short on the point of balance. The exacerbation of time-anxiety without an accompanying evocation of time-defying courage constitutes the demonic element in the timeliness of news.

On first glance, it would seem, if anxieties are raised through disaster news, the balance could be achieved through "undisaster" news. This would be news of normality, of the general security of airplane and automobile travel, of the placidities of hidden streams for holiday vacations. But such news would not only subvert the legitimate purpose of the newspaper; it would fail completely to accomplish the sort of courageous balance Tillich has in mind. This sort of rosy self-assurance about existence would not be news at all; neither would it be courageous.

We may thus eliminate the considerable body of tranquilizing journalism which tells, often by means of the feature story, how science is making the world safer, how medicine is cutting down the death rate, and how progress is reducing hunger and poverty. Such stories tend to allay anxieties rather than affirm courage about a fundamentally permanent human predicament.

The Concept of Kairos

A better approach to the news might come through the concept of *kairos*, a Greek word which in the New Testament means "fullness of time." In the fullest sense, *kairos* has a universal meaning for Christian faith: "the appearing of Jesus as the Christ." It also has a general meaning for history: it is every turning point in history "in which the eternal judges and transforms the divine." Finally, *kairos* has a special sense for every age.

If the newspaper can combine its urgency about time with the special sense of *kairos*—or the fullness of time—for our era, then it can do much to redress the balance in its columns between anxiety and courage. A *kairos* of our own day, for example, appears to be the racial question; a courageous facing-up to the problem in all its complexities at the time when it becomes a problem points the society toward acceptance of the *kairos*.

In the conventional fields of anxiety news, i.e., disaster, catastrophe, and violence, where concern about approaching nonbeing is marked, a better showing could be made by the news if it expressed the *present meaning* of machines and leisure and whatever else enters as the occasion for misfortune. "Knowledge born in the situation of the Kairos . . . is not knowledge growing out of accidental arbitrary events of a period but out of the period's basic significance." [5]

Writing in *Fortune*, a mathematician bluntly expressed the significance of automobile highway fatalities by speaking of the benefits to human existence we have won by having ambulances, fire engines, and other road machines—which are bound to kill a small percentage of people in exchange for the advantages of speed.[6] His approach stands in contrast both to that of the daily newspaper, which plays up disaster news for the stark "news value" (i.e., the value of stimulating anxiety), and also that of the National Safety Council, which appears to argue in theory at least that the suppression of accidents in this industrial age is a matter which can be accomplished by prudent morals among motorists. Thus we have in the *Fortune* article about accidents an example of the *affirming balance* that can be made out of disaster news. About such news the author aims to retain its realism, all of its element of danger and threat to insecurity, but he also ties this anxiety-stimulus to the conception of significant purpose and provides a means for *accepting the disaster with courage*. It is an example of danger in team with the significance of what is happening; it is an example of time and its meaning for us construed as *kairos*. It is, in short, an affirmation of "the courage to be."

But this solution—that the newsman should lace his report with a sense of ultimate importance in order to add courage to the anxiety he stimulates—immediately calls up an old problem. That is the so-called "objectivity" of the journalist. To be sure, recent journalism texts do not hesitate to rank meaning or significance as a criterion of news that is at least as important as the old-fashioned standard of sheer objectivity. "Journalism can offer a service to society," says one, "if it discovers the Why of the news accurately." [7] But another book by the same authors gives a dead-pan picture of the real commitment of the newsman—not to purpose or to the portraying of the unconditional in men's lives, but rather to the *givens* in the situation, the surroundings: "Writers write—or should write —because they have something to say. . . . Journalists cannot do this; the content of their writing is decided for them." The journalist writes about what is near in space and time. What he says is conditioned by the scope of the idea or event about which he writes and by the editorial policy of his paper. The journalist is something like a scientist at work in a laboratory, but the journalist's laboratory is "the world" and his experiment is "life itself." [8] His writing should presumably conform to the impersonal scientific standard of objectivity—no confession of importance from him should be allowed to insinuate itself into the report.

The attempt to have disinterested, objective knowledge presupposes an ability to see which no living creature can imagine—"an eye required to have no direction, to abrogate its active and interpretative powers—precisely those powers that alone make of seeing, seeing *something*." All seeing and all knowledge "is essentially perspective." [9] As we have already conceded, honest journalists no longer contend that they can achieve objectivity of any literal sort. They do pretend, however—and on almost every hand—that the journalist is not concerned with *decision*, that the content of his writing, as Professors Campbell and Wolseley put it, is decided for him.

My aim here is not to scold journalists for their assumption, wherever it still obtains, that the journalist can be concerned with life or even "facts" quite apart from his own presuppositions or commitments. Rather, I want simply to agree that journalism *does* usually find itself not its own master with respect to time and also space, these powerful roots of anxiety which pull at the reader through the printed page. We may thus hold to our conclusion insofar as the problem of time-anxiety is concerned: The technician of journalism is unable to place time in its proper perspective; mass communications functions essentially as a stimulator of time anxiety and is thus in this respect a questionable medium for apologetics.

Space

The professional communicator also finds the category of space built into everything he must write about. How does this category of finitude function as a root of anxiety?

"To have no definite and no final space means ultimate insecurity," says Tillich.[10] The threat of nonbeing eats at us not only by the passage of time but also by the fear of not having a *place*. By his treatment of the category of space, the communicator can manipulate anxieties in various ways—just as he can with the category of time. He can raise the anxiety level by centering on reports which *threaten* one's space or which set one space and its possessor over against another space and its possessors. He can allay anxiety about space spuriously by painting space as a *stronghold* or a safe redoubt, which it is not (for we must all lose our space just as inexorably as we lose our being in the dimension of time). He can equate the threat of lost space with despair. Or, finally, he can realistically present the possibility of destruction of our space which threatens us all; and in parallel with this presentation, he can attempt to invoke the courage of the "new being" which enables men to stand in the face of all such threats.

Let us examine media practices in each of the main two of these directions which prevail—first, the excitement of anxieties about space, with no compensating effort to evoke courage and hope; second, the allaying of anxieties in a spurious attempt to pretend they do not exist.

Excitement About Space

The damning threat of spacelessness is easy to excite in American culture, for it is a culture which has been based on mobility. Americans of our day are without deep roots in the first place. A bit of realistic description of our national character is all that it takes to set off anxieties—assuming the polar affirmation of courage is missing.

City-based Americans, for example, could not exist long if their struggles against nonbeing did not include some aptitude at discovering and safeguarding parking spaces for their automobiles. In New York City and other urban areas short of sufficient parking facilities, the space-anxiety of Americans is naturally high and tuned most delicately to maximum effectiveness.

An amusing feature in the *New York Times Magazine*, "No Parking MonWedFri," [11] tells of the incessant war of nerves which goes on among car owners in the scramble for legal parking space—a scramble that is complicated by sanitation problems of the city. To enable street cleaners to remove trash from the curbs, many of the streets are closed to parking on one side for three hours every other day.

To avoid a fifteen-dollar parking ticket, numerous residents now leave their homes an hour early for work. One apartment dweller in the Bronx worked out a co-operative parking plan with a dentist whose office is in the apartment building—the dentist holds a preferred space during the day, the returning businessman holds it at night. "Both go to sleep secure in the knowledge that they have beaten the 8 A.M. deadline and are safe for another full day, unless—Heaven forbid—one or the other takes sick."

"You can't hold on to your space," is the moral of such accounts. In them, we can see how the stimulation of space-anxiety is to set one space against another. Because the space of each person, group, or nation seems special as a barrier against nonbeing, it is possible to present "interesting" (i.e., anxiety-stimulating) television programs based on spatial finitude. Our anxieties about space are always latent, ready to be exacerbated by some appeal to blood, race, clan, tribe, family—by any feeling that we are *beside* others but not with them.

The current controversy over racial integration has been a mine of space-anxieties, especially where news of the South and its ways is involved. The struggle between East and West, the appeal to fear of the rising nonwhite races of the world, the frequent Malthusian arguments that we are multiplying so fast we will soon run out of room and food—all these are variations of the appeal to space-anxiety. When they are presented in the media as anxiety stimulators without the compensation of space-defying courage, or when they are presented simply as being tantamount to despair, the possibility of using these media for apologetic purposes is accordingly diminished.

Country Weeklies and Travel Sections

To turn to the only other prominent treatment of space—the allaying of anxiety about it—we find two basic subapproaches in the mass media. One is to present one's own space as a final and secure stronghold against all threats from the outside. The other is to act as if we did not have to have a space, to pretend that homelessness is a way of life in which the question of fixity or place never properly arises.

For a clear example of the "stronghold" approach to space, we may turn from the daily newspaper, television, and radio to the geographically oriented media. The small-town weekly newspaper furnishes the best example of optimum use of this type of space-anxiety-allaying. Capitalizing on its proximity to the reader and making the most of its outstanding defect—limited news gathering facilities—the community paper concentrates on local news. Compared with the approach of the daily newspaper to time, the weekly's approach to space is inverted. With its disaster story, the daily invites the reader to imagine himself at the end of his rope of being in time; it offers a vicarious plunge into the abyss of nonbeing with its description of other selves who have actually gone over the brink. But the weekly newspaper takes the opposite tack. It urges the reader to *forget* that some day he must be drawn from his space. It encourages him to think of his space—his personal space, the space in which he lives and works and meets people. Where the daily with its sense of time appeals to insecurity, the weekly with its sense of space appeals to security—a security that does not really exist, but may easily, with the proper verbal cues, be imagined to. It is as if the weekly newspaper redrew the world once a week and left out the strangeness and the space-anxiety of existence and, above all, omitted the cold fact that even the most private space is not long one's own. It ignores the final spacelessness implied in finitude which cannot be done away with or shuffled out of the cards. For to the average weekly newspaper a box supper at the First Community Church is news; an earthquake in Japan is not unless a hometown soldier is killed in it.

The result is not the direct excitation of anxieties but, instead, the repression of them.

Another approach which has the same result—repression of anxiety about space—is to treat one's own space as an unnecessary or unreal category of finitude. Travel advertising thrives on this approach; the better science fiction often depends upon it.

Space and time are detachable burdens which can be left behind, many travel ads imply. Here is the way the Grace Line puts it:

> Time out for the time of your life! Follow the sun south on a Grace Line Cruise to the most exciting ports of the Caribbean and South America. Leave cold weather and cares behind. Meet new friends, see new places. Return a new person . . . tanned, rested, refreshed.

Thus on a cruise one may stop the clock, i.e., shut off the onrush of time towards one's destiny. What is more, he may leave behind the empirical manifestations of *having a place*, such as "cold weather and cares." The ads carefully avoid the suggestion that the traveler is going to be encountering new space as a matter of his finitude, i.e., as a burden. Rather this encounter promises to be exciting and novel, with no responsibilities attached. Where geographical fixed points must be referred to, the reader is invited not to believe that he will be subject to them in his finitude, for he is only going to "see" new places—not have to live in them.

Space-repression is also seen in such phrases as these, all taken from the same travel section of the *New York Times:*

"*Away from winter all the way!*" (Norwegian American Line). Unpleasant climate is an aspect of the space-one-is-leaving; since one is not going to be saddled with any space-responsibilities on his cruise, he is free to expect sunshine only, and the possibility of an ocean storm is ignored.

"*Around the World in 44 Days*" (Bachelor Party Tours). The gay bachelor is not freed of time-finitude in this appeal (indeed, his time-anxiety is stimulated by the short, forty-four day schedule); but he is free of *every place*. He becomes a human satellite who for a month-and-a-half can escape the forces of existential gravity.

"*Our representative meets you at each port, handles all details.*" (Four Winds Cruises). This is almost a concession that space and its burden are inescapable—that no matter at which port one docks, he must still establish a place for himself and hold it against various threats and in spite of multifarious inconveniences. Yet the same antidote to space which can be the customer's on the high seas can be his when he approaches foreign soil: the ministrations of the space-banishing cruise agency.

Needless to say, the hotels which advertise in the same travel sections, being fixed themselves in space, do not use the anxiety-repressing approach. Rather, their approach is formally identical with that of the weekly newspaper. The hotel becomes a bastion of private space for the visitor, immune from the threats which are always being leveled at all space: "You're actually next door to everything at Skyline Motor Inn—but without the traffic and parking worries associated with a central location." Note the pointed references to places and geographic features:

> Located in Miami Beach's uncrowded "Millionaire's Mile"—the magnificent Montmartre offers an unprecedented "first" in casual resort living . . . no bustling conventions . . . no intrusions on your "villa" privacy. Just pleasure! Every room has a view of the water. Most with private terraces. You'll enjoy the Tropical Patio, the private sandy beach, our olympic, mineral-fed pool, 9-hole putting green, the cabana-play areas.

We could also, if there were more pages available for this interesting subject, take up the problem of *combinations* between these two roots of finitude, time and space. Thus a newspaper story about a fire which destroys a whole family and the family home along with it amounts to an appeal to time-anxiety (the disaster reminding us all of our approaching end) which is confirmed or supported by a space-anxiety (the threat to space implied in the loss of a home). Occasionally there are contradictions between the effects of the two roots of finitude. Thus the travel agency which proclaims "Around the world in 44 days" is suggesting to the reader that he (1) is able to free himself of place, but (2) can never free himself of time. (Hence the desirability of that agency's cruise, which keeps you free of space in such a complete way without obliterating too much of the time remaining to one in his fight for being.)

Let us pause, finally, to recall that the reader's obsession with the threat of space to his being, like the corresponding obsession with time, is not to be set down as sin. Space-anxiety, too, is part of life for finite creatures: it is a way of living and cannot be avoided. Again, however, we must remember that there is a polar character about man. Along with his worry about the removal of his body from space—and his susceptibility to arguments that he is immune from the ravages of space—there is the antipodal courage to stand in the face of anxiety. It is this courage which makes his existence possible. The mass media, to constitute sound channels for reaching the religious point of contact represented by human anxiety about space, would have to learn some way of getting their consumers to face "the occasions when not-having-a-place becomes an actual threat." This would include helping the consumer to find the paradoxical spirit to accept "both preliminary and final spacelessness" [12] without taking the short cut of pretending that spacelessness is not a threat to being.

Causality

The third category of finitude is causality. As human beings, we must always be intrigued by the mystery of why things are the way they are. We are condemned ceaselessly to pursue this "why"—to look for the reasons behind being; and we are just as certain not to gain a satisfactory explanation as the result of our efforts. Indeed, our dependence on causality is the final reminder that nonbeing threatens everything: "Causality expresses by implication the inability of anything to rest on itself." [13]

For this category of finitude, too, the mass media have developed highly specialized channels to exploit the anxiety which is part of it. Advertising, particularly recent kinds based on motivation research and depth interviews, depends on this root of finitude. Attention to causality as a primary shaping force (rather than space and time) marks a new and powerful genre of journalism which includes: the news magazines—*Time, Newsweek* and other prototypes of interpretive reporting; newspaper columnists (as opposed to ordinary reporters), who are holders of the primary patents for "behind-the-scenes" writing; certain radio and television analysts; and the authors of such newsletters as the *Kiplinger Washington Letter.*

The chief approaches to cause-anxiety are similar in form to those we have already noticed under the headings of space and time. That is, the mass media are for the most part expert at (1) stimulating cause-anxiety to a higher pitch; and (2) allaying the anxiety by offering specious means for assuring its nonexistence—e.g., an advertised product.

Where causality is at issue, the anxiety in the recipient of communication is a matter of aseity, or his degree of feeling sufficient in himself. The approach which *stimulates* cause-anxiety leads the recipient to feel that he is *not* sufficient unto himself—and leaves him to his despair, or to the arguments of someone who claims to be able to banish not only the despair, but the anxiety also. The approach which *allays* this anxiety offers the recipient the possibility of believing that he in himself *is* self-sufficient.

It should be noted before we begin that neither of these approaches corresponds to the Christian approaches to anxiety which we have already suggested for the realms of time and space. Since no one is self-sufficient or self-caused, he must inevitably have a degree of anxiety about the causality which allows him to be. According to Christian faith, however, this anxiety need not be despair; the courage and hope which come from faith in a creator can stand as "antidotes" or "good influences" on the anxiety, diverting it into creative channels.

Television's Yen to Talk Causality

We may investigate certain themes of contemporary advertising in order to see how causality is exploited in the first of these ways, the route of excitation. (Of course, in the end, the advertiser's product is put forward as a way of reducing the artificially stimulated anxiety; but we are interested for the moment in following the method by which the anxiety is stimulated.)

The human anatomy is a complicated mechanism. Its possible defects and ills, real or imagined, are so numerous they almost defy cataloguing. It is feasible to talk just enough about these ills and their causes to convince the average consumer that he is indeed a helpless victim of outside circumstances about which he *alone* can do nothing. After that, the product being advertised is brought forward as the remover of the contingency, as the means of transmuting the consumer into a self-caused entity—until the elixir runs out, at least.

Television commercials for cough and cold remedies show us this approach to anxiety-about-causality in a very dramatic fashion.

For example, a man is shown with a cough. A diagram flashes on the screen "revealing" how the cough is caused by nerve impulses from the brain. The action is involuntary; nothing the consumer can do *alone* will reduce the impulse to cough; not even the other cough remedies will help. (Here the screen shows a competing brand of cough syrup oozing down the consumer's throat. Nothing happens, the announcer's voice explains, because the cough is controlled by nerve impulses, which may not be reached from the surface.)

At this point the consumer's anxiety is at its maximum—according to theory, at least. He has been convinced by this little lesson in physiology that the causes of his cough are inscrutable. Will power will not help him. Other brands of cough syrup simply coat the throat or slide off the windpipe without getting at the real cause of the cough. In short, the consumer is left with only one leading problem: his anxiety about not being the sufficient cause of his own situation.

All else, of course, is anticlimax. A new picture flashes on the screen showing the advertiser's own brand of cough syrup. Instead of sliding harmlessly down the throat, *this* brand quickly gets into the blood stream, goes straight to the brain—"helps put cough nerves to sleep"—"coughing checked!" With *this* brand, the consumer can attain aseity or self-sufficiency once again. Until the customer goes out and buys a bottle, however, his anxiety will remain high; he will feel the threat of nonbeing every time he coughs.

Some advertisers will even go to the trouble of inventing a malady—"tired blood," "dishpan hands"—to pinpoint the anxiety better.

The Federal Trade Commission has lately been citing drug firms for making excessive claims. It has also objected to rigged "demonstrations" in TV advertising. These demonstrations are like the classical arguments for the existence of God in that they demonstrate human anxiety rather than prove anything about the cosmos.

Advertising based on motivational research also makes use of consumer anxiety about insufficiency of being, but in a new way. The proponent of motivation research does not trust "reason-why" advertising. It is never a *rational* explanation to which the consumer really attends; rather, he will buy when an appeal is made to his unconscious or hidden desires. The motivation researcher then wants to exploit anxiety about causality in an even more direct way than the conventional advertiser; he wants to find out *why people actually buy* instead of confining himself to thinking up good reasons why they *should* buy.[14] To put it another way, instead of building up an argument or "pitch" to convince the consumer that he is insufficient alone and is at the mercy of such forces as the laws of physiology (really an appeal to reason), the motivation researcher taps the consumer's awareness at points where he is *already* anxious about just this state of contingency. The advertiser sells by choosing the right symbol with which to identify his product. The consumer buys the symbol and satisfies a feeling of insufficiency that he doesn't even "know" about in any formal, rational sense.

Thus a prospective car buyer (male), is attracted to a convertible in the window not because the convertible is an unusually good reminder to the consumer that he needs locomotion. The buyer wants the convertible for an entirely different reason, according to the motivational researchers—a reason which has nothing to do with transportation. The convertible is a "possible symbolic mistress," according to Ernst Dichter. Thus the buyer comes into the car agency in the first place because the symbol he has seen in the window seems to promise him a way of overcoming his insufficient access to sexual adventure. He will probably end up by buying a sedan, just as he will end up returning to his wife for his sexual adventures; but the convertible has done its symbolic work simply by *promising* to fulfill an important contingency in his life which he could never hope to fulfill alone. Thus the symbol raises—and then allays—the anxiety.

Sometimes the symbol is deliberately built into the product, where it functions from then on as a trigger to excite and then tap anxiety-about-causality, and do it on the subrational level. For example, the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency urged the J. B. Williams Company "to make its shaving cream yellow, which would 'demonstrate' the lanolin content." [15] Here the color acts to confirm whatever anxiety-about-causality this company and others have been able to stimulate on the subject of lanolin—anxiety that the skin will be cracked and painful without it, perhaps. At the same time, the color suggests that here is a product which will free the consumer from his anxiety, and make him independent of whatever forces of nature or environment are acting to crack his skin and make it hurt.

The Tranquilizing of News Magazines

Up to now, we have been exploring the uses of anxiety-about-causality which depended on *stimulation*. These uses have all relied on telling the recipient of communication that his being is insufficiently caused or explained within itself—on telling him, in short, that he is contingent, that he cannot rest on himself.

But causality can also have quite the opposite effect on us. The communication can present us an explanation of our being that is so complete in appearance that we lose our anxiety. For causality is an ambiguous root of finitude, just as the others—time, space, substance—also are. It expresses both being and nonbeing. It can be used not only to point us to the fact that we are incomplete in ourselves; it can also be used to make us remember we are real. "If something is causally explained," Tillich says, "its reality is affirmed, and the power of its resistance against nonbeing is understood." [16]

To view the use of causality as a direct allayer of human anxiety, we may turn to the weekly news magazines and their "interpretive" approach to the news.

Operating on a weekly instead of a daily schedule, the news magazines are under no particular pressure to funnel the latest facts moment by moment into the reader's consciousness. But they have all the facilities for world-wide, up-to-the-minute news coverage. Hence they are relatively less hampered by time and space than any of the media we have been discussing. They are perforce free to concentrate on causality.

Interpretive journalism attempts to *explain* the news insofar as the past is concerned and often purports to *predict* what will be news in the future. In either case the effect is to seem to build a foundation of fathomable reality under life, seal it off from the nothingness of ultimate unexplainability. Such journalism, of course, has in common with the country weekly a soothing approach to anxiety in contrast with the tension-raising technique of ordinary newspaper and radio reporting.

The first person I ever heard use the term "backgrounding the news" was Sidney Kobre, a journalism teacher. He has a book by that name: *Backgrounding the News.*[17] To Professor Kobre, an evangelical exponent of his subject, backgrounding is the only way to truth, beauty, and the good society. Digging out the causes of crime, for example, and exposing them in the press is to him the key to crime prevention. The event of the prison riot is only the exposed pinnacle of an iceberg of news, he maintains; underneath the surface are the hatreds and vital drives of the rioting prisoners. Back of these hatreds and drives are childhood shocks, social deprivations, the everyday stumblings of a shortsighted society. A complete news story starts at the "beginning" with the antecedent chain of causes. It hangs together around the social meaning of the news. Down the middle of the Kobre-type story runs the drive shaft of social reform. The reporter's sense of purpose is what holds the story together, not the chronology.

There is nothing especially new about this type of journalism, of course. It began in this country with the muckrakers just before the turn of the century. On the West coast to cover the trial of the McNamara brothers, labor leaders charged with murder, Lincoln Steffens disagreed with the trial judge that it was a mere "murder case."

> It is a social manifestation of a condition, not a mere legal offense, this crime. If these men did it, they did it as the appointed agents of labor, and they and their organization of ordinary working-men must have suffered something worth our knowing about to get worked up to a state of mind where they deliberately, as a policy, could carry on for years dynamiting, arson, murder. What were those real or fancied wrongs, what are the conditions which produced this—act of war? That's what has to be gone into.[18]

Needless to say, not all interpretive journalism has this depth of purpose. Too often, in the news magazines, the events precedent to a crime or other news event are run off merely for the gratification or arousement of the reader's curiosity; or they are put in line calculatingly, with the idea of building up to a suspenseful ending. Many stories in *Time* are patterned on the latter order. The gospel of betterment is rare here.

The backgrounding theory, with all its good intentions for mankind, has a fundamental flaw from the theological point of view. This is the assumption, common to all interpretive journalism which seeks to explain the past, that the "beginning" of a news story may be literally dredged up and pointed to. Such journalism, unbalanced by the polar affirmation of the ultimate mystery of life, may be idolatrous. That is, it may lead us to worship ourselves and our enterprises as self-explainable, self-caused, and self-sufficient. We must remember the warning voiced by Tillich: "Things and events have no aseity," he says. "This is characteristic only of God. Finite things are not self-caused." [19] Interpretive journalism proceeds on the assumption that things *are* self-caused; or, that one thing is the adequate cause of another, which comes to the same thing. So the man who will some day be snuffed out is assured that he and the other things around him are not contingent; that they are determined out of themselves and each other; and that the pattern thereof may be more or less exactly revealed by proper journalistic techniques. Interpretation journalism universally confuses occasion with cause and pays the highest possible compliment to the furniture of this world; that it is self-explanatory and self-sufficient.

Interpretation journalism, moreover, neglects to make the affirmation to the reader, necessary for balance, that he might not *be*. It forgets that "courage ignores the causal dependence of everything finite," that a man is bravest and most a man when he admits the final concealment of the secret of life in the face of his best laboratory methods, journalistically employed. The smooth explanations of modern mass communications deaden men to the mystery of being; and we are justified in wondering whether the mass media, in their approach to causality, can fully be used as a point of contact that is also a point of conflict reminding man of the abyss which is his origin.

When interpretation journalism turns its analytical apparatus from past to future, we still have the same false assurances about the nature of causality. Whereas *backgrounding* gives us a deceptively simple picture of where we came from, *prophecy* gives us a deceptively simple picture of where we are going.

Such features as "Periscope" (*Newsweek*) and "Newsgram," "Washington Whispers" (*U.S. News & World Report*) pretend to forecast coming events, political fortunes, business trends, and so on. A case could be made against this kind of journalism for its patent inaccuracy. After a study, Ben H. Bagdikian of the *Providence Journal* charged that only 18 per cent of the prophecies in *Newsweek's* "Periscope" section were accurate, whereas nearly half "were too vague or were impossible to judge or check and therefore useless to the reader." The "Worldgram" of *U. S. News & World Report* often missed a prophecy completely, he found, then would ignore its failure and continue an ommiscient attitude on the same subject.

It is not, however, the factual error or mistaken reading of trends to which we may object in a theological study of interpretation journalism. The problem is rather the view of creation which is entertained by the journalist and pictured in his prophetic writings. "The compulsion to prophesy in *U. S. News & World Report* and in *Newsweek* builds up the illusion of an overly simple world to which each magazine has the keyhole," writes Bagdikian. These magazines capitalize on the universal human anxiety that stems from our inability to know what is going to happen to us—the root of finitude seen in causality, projected toward the future. As Bagdikian says, "If the newsmagazines often make the news too simple and too dramatic, they survive because the popular hunger is there." [20] Human beings want their fear of nonbeing overcome, and they are willing to have it overcome by the argument that there is nothing unknowable about the future and hence nothing to fear.

The theological judgment is that no earthly system of causes—either that which goes back into the past and pretends to tell man what he is, or the speculative one that goes into the future and pretends to tell man what he will be—deserves unconditioned allegiance from the reader. Men are immersed in causes and contingency, of course, and they will always be seeking explanations of reality. But explanation can never solve the mystery or relieve the tension. "Causality expresses by implication the inability of anything to rest on itself. . . . Causality powerfully expresses the abyss of nonbeing in everything." [21] If we are honest portrayers of causality, the net result will be to convince us more than ever, rather than less, of our dependence and to show us the mystery which surrounds both the past and future of our being. But along with this sense of dependence and mystery there can be a balancing reality.

We will do well to agree with Professor Kobre, of course, in the view that mankind needs to explore with all its energy the causes of crime and to publicize them. To do this it needs the services of the psychologist, the psychiatrist, and the zealous journalist as well. As for the newspaper and newsmagazine, the more they say about the causes, the better. But the tentative and partial explanations of reality offered by both science and journalism should not be magnified into rounded, complete, satisfactory revelation of being. Above all, the well-meaning scientist or journalist must not use his sketchy results to becalm the anxieties of his listeners, for either commercial or humanitarian purposes. Along with its probes into the nature of reality, interpretation journalism must remember: "Courage ignores the causal dependence of everything finite." It must try to understand how beings dependent on the causal nexus and its contingencies can accept this dependence and at the same time forget it.

Substance

The fourth category which reminds all men that they represent both being and nonbeing, says Tillich, is substance. Substance is quite different from causality. It does not point to antecedents and effects, to movements, to motivations, or to consequences. Rather it refers to the qualities of things that make them seem here to stay, to qualities that may be looked at and banked upon. Man's anxiety is that he will *lose* his substance, and it is a well-placed anxiety, for that *is* what will happen to him in the long run. This anxiety reflects the element of nonbeing that is within every finite self, even when it is successfully living and conserving its substance.

Exploitation of anxiety about substance is accomplished through every communicative channel. Two in particular seem well geared to making contact with the recipient of communication via this anxiety. These are advertising and pictorial journalism. The subject matter of each is often substance per se. But other channels—the society columns of the daily newspaper—are also interesting and important for their use of anxiety about substance.

As with the other roots of anxiety, with this fourth one we find two fundamental approaches among the media. First, the level of anxiety about substance may be *raised* by the communication. Second, the already existing or artificially stimulated anxiety about substance may be *allayed* or slaked (temporarily at least) by the offering of more substance. Once again, we must expect the truth, theologically speaking, to be that the anxiety is a natural one which can never be eliminated, not even by unlimited access to goods. The alternative proposed by Christian faith is courage which will enable the consumer to understand that mere goods will not meet his needs and hope to match the realization that not even the substance of his own body will endure.

The Creation of Wants by Advertising

Let us first examine advertising, which is the medium par excellence for falsely stimulating the desire for substance. The more men are without love the more their personalities emerge as grasping mechanisms and the more they regard the things about them as wares to be had. The unloving personality "is open to every allurement brought to it from without." That is the reason why "the possibility of arousing wants through salesmanship and advertising is unlimited." [22] Advertising exploits substance-consciousness not only by giving man enough to satisfy his basic physical needs; it also fastens his wandering eye on all kinds of proffered items above and beyond his elemental needs, by appealing to man's want of a place to rest his affections in a disordered society. Thus things become wares, things-to-be-had, rather than objects of intrinsic merit.

In our affluent society, physical wants can be satisfied rather easily and in definite ways. But psychological wants, when created and stimulated by advertising, are literally boundless. One of the chief problems of our economy, according to Galbraith, is that production has been tied to the creation of wants:

> A new consumer product must be introduced with a suitable advertising campaign to arouse an interest in it. The path for an ex-

> pansion of output must be paved by a suitable expansion in the advertising budget. Outlays for the manufacturing of a product are not more important in the strategy of the modern business enterprise than outlays for the manufacturing of demand for the product.[23]

Here even more clearly than with the other roots of finitude are we permitted to see how the mass media function in their double role of (1) stimulators of artificially high anxiety about finitude; (2) conveyors of a solution that purports to allay or reduce not only the artificially stimulated increment of anxiety, but all of the anxiety. Actively through advertising and related activities, production "creates the wants it seeks to satisfy."

As is well known, this function of advertising, to create desires as well as proffer the goods to satisfy them, goes back to the great revolution in communications of the late nineteenth century. From this point on, advertising was no longer a "coupling device" between existing market demand and supply; rather, it became a dynamic agency for creating demand. Advertising henceforth defined its recipient as a consumer and its own mission as one of stimulating him to consume.

Let us examine newspaper advertising to see how the anxiety about substance is raised, then (presumably) lowered, when the product heaves into view.

We may profitably consider an advertisement for an item of male apparel called a "Scardigan." This consists of a wool muffler which, when in place beneath a coat, looks to all intents and purposes like a cardigan sweater. The effect is achieved chiefly by buttons and pockets on the front of the muffler.

It is safe to predict that before numerous readers read the *New York Times* for November 22, 1959, they did not want, need, or desire a "Scardigan." It is also safe to predict that after some of these readers finished that issue of the *Times*, they wanted, needed, and desired a "Scardigan" very much. For in this issue appears an advertisement inserted by Weber and Heilbroner explaining to New Yorkers why they should be in the market for a "Scardigan."

The fear of losing one's substance is assailable in infinite ways. We are afraid, for example, of losing our bodies to the threat of cold weather. Hence an advertised product that is made of "pure wool" and constitutes "warm insulation" is already off to a good start. But we are also afraid of losing our pecuniary substance; and if this pure wool muffler, costing only $3.95, is also a reasonable imitation beneath one's coat of a cardigan sweater costing $19.95, it is even more likely to assume the appearance of a good or substance that is desired. Finally, we are afraid of losing our psychological substance; the threat of social nonbeing gnaws away at us all the time. So when the "Scardigan" is pronounced an item "tops in favor with men today" and something wearable "in the New York manner" besides, the appeal mounts to its zenith.

Other advertisements, instead of presenting the product being sold as a necessary addition to one's own substance (e.g., the "Scardigan"), claim instead only to preserve the substance one already has. But the effect on anxiety may be to raise it even more, because the most frightening thing of all must be to lose the substance we now think we have. Thus a toothpaste advertisement pictures a lovely young female face and asks: "Does she brush every day . . . and still get decay?" The effect on mothers, if the ad works, must be to conjure up a vision of the daughter losing not only her physical substance but her social substance (future attractiveness as an eligible young woman, for example) as well. The redeemer who will preserve the girl's dental substance is in this case the Bristol-Myers Company and its "*new* Ipana—now with *germ-killing hexachlorophene*," which is "twice as effective against decay germs!"

We had better pause at this point to recall some of our presuppositions. Man's need for substance is not sinful any more than are any of his other manifestations of finitude, such as his movement through time and space or his inability to be the cause of his own being. Neither is our modern industrial society intrinsically sinful, for it is but a manifestation of human finitude in the realm of substance. On the contrary, man's development of mass production facilities has resulted in an ability to rise above the animal level, and even above a grossly deterministic human level of life.

Something is wrong only when man's normal and proper anxiety about substance is tampered with. This tampering consists in inflating his anxiety to abnormally high levels, either about acquisition of new substance or about preservation of his present substance. Or it consists in offering him the substances of mass production as ways to *get rid of his anxieties*, either the artificially stimulated ones or the real ones. Christian faith tells us that bread alone is never enough, and the person who is led to think that it is can only reap despair as his reward. Apparently, however, advertising depends (according to such analysts as Galbraith), on the fact that men can be made to think their anxieties can be satisfied, set to rest by products. At this point, man is led into a never-ending fight for wares; he is sentenced by his illusion that he can satisfy himself "to engage in unending, ever-increasing, life-consuming activity in the service of unlimited wants." [24] Advertising that answers the need for substance is one thing; advertising that promotes the view of things as wares which can relieve us of anxiety and transforms the personality into a "grasping mechanism" is something else.

The Christian gospel tells man he can stand in the face of his fears about substance. It also assures him that the acquisition of substance will not finally stave off the loss of his own substance. But mass media, in making contact with human anxiety about substance, neglect to affirm the courage that enables one to accept "the threat of losing individual substance and the substance of being generally." [25] Instead, as we have seen, they raise the level of this anxiety and then pass off production goods as ways of relieving it.

The Permanence of Pictures

Pictorial journalism is another channel which exploits substance-anxiety. It caters directly to the fundamental form of this anxiety, the apprehension that substance is a necessity for being. A static picture, such as a skyline view of New York City, assures the reader that he will not have to die; by implication, he is solidly a part of this permanent pile of concrete and steel. But the static shot or still life is not the forte of pictorial journalism. The camera is at its best when it is trained on action and human emotion. Here, too, pictorial media play on substance-anxiety. Pictures of upheavals and destruction, like news stories about disaster, remind the reader that he will have to undergo the mangling and loss of his substance and *die*. The picture of a hydrogen bomb explosion in *Look* symbolizes the anxiety that everything changes and that all change is a prelude to a final upheaval in which everyone will lose his substance. Thus, picture journalism plays anxieties in both directions. It utilizes the allaying or tranquilizing approach that we have already noticed in the country weekly and travel advertising (with respect to space) and the news magazines (with respect to causality). It utilizes the vicarious-thrill or shock approach that we have already noticed in the daily newspaper's approach to time.

This seems an ambivalent approach, but fundamentally pictorial journalism *allays*, rather than excites, anxiety about substance. In the final analysis a photograph attributes substantiality to man. It glosses over the accidental character of all his creations just as it freezes into arrested action even the most vivid changes in surroundings—e.g., in pictures of hurricanes, floods, fighting, and slum clearance. The net effect of pictures, by their very nature, is to bespeak a perennial substance to be photographed—as the color ads of women's magazines testify.

On the whole, pictorial journalism's presentation of substance then obscures the threat of finitude and advances no argument in favor of courage. Assurances of permanence are not affirmations of hope; they are the opposite. A picture is always of a concrete situation; and pictorial journalism, except for the unusually creative disaster picture or the like, can never fully convince its consumers that "the human experience of having to die anticipates the complete loss of identity with one's self." [26]

What I have said here about pictures I intend to apply only to the mass media. The evaluation of art itself is not within the scope of this study. When "art" is drawn into the orbit of mass media, it often is reduced in its dimensions to entertainment or advertising, and in that case it comes within the analyses I have been making. The mass media are concerned with "making the obvious and approved more obvious and approved," and it is only beyond this point that art begins.[27]

Substance on the Society Page

The society pages (to take one more example) are invested with all sorts of testimonies in favor of the need for psychological substance, of social status. One lives the gentleman's life when he entertains dignitaries; he holds onto his being in this way, by protecting it from the decay of not being fashionable or in good form. One lives the lady's life, to take an even more pointed example, when she sponsors "coffees" or attends "chocolates." It is no coincidence that these affairs are properly designated by substance-labels. One's right to psychological substance is tied in interestingly with affirmations of the possession of physical substance. Wedding showers, to be acceptable, must be reported as having featured, for instance, dainty wafers, or a certain kind of punch, identifiable by name or ingredients. No wedding write-up is complete without a description of the gowns worn by bride, mother, mother-in-law, and the attendants. Engagement announcements are made substantial by duly recording the bridegroom's place of employment, which permits speculation on financial as well as social substance. Not even the work of a religious organization is properly shored up as to social substance unless something can be said about the presiding officer more or less to the effect that she was "her usual modish self in a black-and-white tweed ensemble." It always attests to the validity of an affair to be able to observe that an old copper water jug filled with sprays of red nandina berries and a nosegay of pine cones adorned the entrance-hall table.

Seeing and reading about themselves in these status-securing (and hence substance-securing) categories has become indispensable to Americans. Unquestionably, journalism has taken notice of these anxieties and used them to establish a point of contact. The mass media, it is not too much to say, have truly penetrated to the "boundary situations" or the inmost existential needs of their recipients. Yet the universal tendency of these media, we have found, is to arouse anxieties with a "fix," or rigged answer, in mind—and without affirming the "courage to be" that Christian faith contemplates as the answer to them. The "fix" turns out to be the proffering of a product or some other short-range solution which pretends to allay what cannot be allayed. And the long-range result, instead of removing the anxiety, is only to leave the recipient holding to an illusion that becomes despair.

Thus the net tendency of the point of contact of mass communications on American anxieties is to encourage movement away from the Christian proclamation, which sees anxiety as an inevitable part of existence and offers faith and courage as a way of facing it. Mass communications purports to give us security by telling us that we can cure our anxieties through the products sold by advertising, or through Americanism, or through the Chamber of Commerce, or through social activities. We never see ourselves, as our social foibles are written up, as standing in need of a divine word that replaces the competition of honorifics. We never see in a newspaper article about a disaster "the implicit suggestion that the monster we thought we had tamed is breaking out and taking its revenge." [28] The mass media establish contact with readers at the elemental level of basic human need. But they do not go on from there, as the classical apologist did, to talk of the need as the best evidence *against* what the culture has to offer.

The result, in the long run, is to increase despair. The media fall short of apologetic presentation because they do not present man's needs as a judgment against human self-sufficiency.

True Secular Apology

Our conclusion must not be to deplore the mass media for the lack of interest in formal Christian apologetics. It is, after all, unreasonable to expect newspapers and television stations to take up the cudgels for the *organized* church. It seems proper, then, to inquire if the communication voices of secular society may not have ways of speaking a secular kind of message, which if not gospel, is at least preparation for it. We must ask whether there is any way by which newspapers, television, radio, film, and other media can contribute to an appreciation, not of the institution of Christianity, but rather of seriousness about the meaning of existence.

Perhaps we would do well to begin by recognizing that the mass media, despite the defects we have pointed out here, do play a vital role in giving meaning to everyday life. When New York newspapers ceased publication for a time in 1958 due to a strike, "boredom, as well as idleness, was evident among newspaperless residents of the New York area." Penn Kimball, after a survey, reported a "void," "emptiness," "lost" feelings among many respondents. The newspapers had helped organize and interpret life, even if (as we have seen) they do so on a somewhat paganized basis. Some New Yorkers turned to housework, some to books. Some went visiting more, some slept more, some watched television and listened to radio more. "But without newspapers," Kimball concluded, "many seemed to possess limited resources for occupying themselves through other means." [29]

Communication which is this meaningful must have potentialities for interpreting authentic existence. But how? We have already eliminated the explicit symbols of religiosity in mass media as means of eliciting seriousness. We have eliminated the use of the point of contact with anxiety, because this in the mass media is hardly ever shown as a point of conflict before the gospel. But there is a *third* approach. We may look simply for expressions of the *kairoi* of our time and of "ultimate concern" in the mass media. Tillich's description of the latent religious possibilities in art provides an analogue for our consideration of mass communication:

> All art which reflects, however partially and distortedly, . . . ultimate concern is at least implicitly religious, even if it makes no use whatever of a recognizable religious subject-matter or traditional religious symbols. Picasso's *Guernica* is profoundly religious in this implicit sense because it expresses so honestly and powerfully modern man's anguished search for ultimate meaning and his passionate revolt against cruelty and hatred.[30]

To recur to the racial issue as our example, it is obvious that secular communicators stand everywhere as revealers of what is a *kairos* of our time, insofar as they report honestly and profoundly the progress of the struggle for racial equality. In functioning this way, they can practice as current historians (which is to practice from strength, for a journalist) and eschew any attempt to function as evangelists (which is to practice from weakness, for a journalist). Whereas the church-centered religious apologist consciously seeks out secular myths as the vehicle for a biblical pronouncement, the secular communicator of ultimate concern merely does his job bravely and scrupulously as a reporter of human affairs. In fact, one criterion of his true interest in reporting matters of "ultimate concern" is likely to be the danger he encounters in his reporting efforts. Angry mobs in Clinton, Tennessee, and Little Rock, Arkansas, attacked photographers and reporters when these newsmen attempted to cover school integration riots. These two incidents but illustrate what has happened to newsmen all over the South, not for advocating integration especially, but for describing a depth struggle in the field of brotherhood.

The mass media, even when their aims are not directly to call for enactment of the second great commandment, have helped to promote a new reality in the field of brotherhood. With its deadpan portrayal of white crowds spitting on Negro schoolgirls, angry segregationists lunging at cameramen—and professional Northerners making wild-eyed pronouncements!—the press became a "witness to the truth" in a profound way that it can never duplicate with its pious attempts to report explicitly religious news.

Race relations is but one *kairos* of our time. There are scores of others. And it is in reporting these events decisive for our present situation that the press does what the church has a right to expect of it.

NOTES

1. *Systematic Theology, op. cit.*, I, 191, 201.
2. *Ibid.*, I, 192.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 193-94.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *The Interpretation of History*, p. 174.
6. John D. Williams, "The Nonsense About Safe Driving," *Fortune*, September 1958, pp. 118-19.
7. Laurence R. Campbell and Roland E. Wolseley, *Newsmen at Work* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), p. 73.
8. Laurence R. Campbell and Roland E. Wolseley, *Exploring Journalism* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949), pp. 196-97.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, 3rd essay, 12 (Anchor ed., p. 255).
10. Tillich, *Systematic Theology, op. cit.*, 195.
11. October 18, 1959, pp. 66-70.
12. Tillich, *Systematic Theology, op. cit.*, I, 195.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
14. Cf. George Horsley Smith, *Motivation Research in Advertising and Marketing* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1954), pp. 3-4.
15. Martin Mayer, *Madison Avenue, U.S.A.* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 124-25.
16. Tillich, *Systematic Theology, op. cit.*, I, 195.
17. Sidney Kobre, *Backgrounding the News: the Newspaper and the Social Sciences* (Baltimore: Twentieth Century Press, 1939).
18. Steffens, *op. cit.*, p. 661.
19. Tillich, *Systematic Theology, op. cit.*, I, 196.

20. Ben H. Bagdikian, "Prophecy Seems a Newsmagazine Compulsion," *Nashville Tennessean*, November 21, 1958.
21. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *op. cit.*, I, 196.
22. Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
23. John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), p. 156.
24. Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
25. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, *op. cit.*, I, 198.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-98.
27. Ernst Van Den Haag, "Of Happiness and Despair We Have No Measure," in *Mass Culture*; ed. Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1957), p. 517. My analysis is also inadequate to take into account the motion picture, and I do not intend my remarks on pictorial journalism to apply to films.
28. Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, tr. Katherine Farrer (Westminster, England: Dacre, 1949), p. 187.
29. Penn Kimball, "People Without Papers," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XXIII (Fall, 1959), 395-96.
30. Theodore M. Green and Paul Tillich, "Authentic Religious Art," *Arts Digest*, XXVIII (August, 1954), 13.

CHAPTER VII

CAN THE CHURCH USE MASS MEDIA FOR SEEKING THE OUTSIDER?

When the secular communicator attempts to become the bearer of explicit religious symbols to the outsider, the result may well be the transmission, not of biblical truth, but only of a strengthless religiosity. When the mass media are examined for the capacity of making a point of contact with the outsider's anxieties (as we have just done in Chapter VI), their influence may be seen to take on the color of the demonic.

Nevertheless, we have found abundant evidence that the mass media, in numerous roles and situations, can be of importance and service to the church.

Up to this point, however, we have looked at these media as independent entities, seeing them only as they communicate the symbols and concerns of religion on their own initiative. To bring our study to completion, we must now consider these media as they may be used by the church itself in the mission of seeking the outsider. We must then turn to the churchman himself as a mass communicator and examine his effort at conveying the Christian message beyond the church.

The first thing to be said is that nowadays this effort is of considerable magnitude. A half-dozen or more denominations have ventured into production of films and television programs. Press and public relations agencies with trained, able talent are found even among denominations that once were steadfastly sectarian. The larger denominations turn out religious books by the score with distribution not only through their own churches and agencies, but also through ordinary commercial channels. Carrying out what its bishops described as a "bold new venture" in religious journalism, The Methodist Church publishes a multicolored family magazine, *Together*, which seeks national advertising and can claim a circulation of more than one million. Everywhere individual congregations produce newspapers and bulletins and put their ministers on radio and television. One of the latest successes in reaching the public has come through the use of telephone installations which offer tape-recorded prayers to callers. The "Prayer Telephone" at John Sutherland Bonnell's Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, for example, has drawn up to eight hundred calls an hour.[1]

The Use of Explicit Christian Symbols

We can profitably follow the same scheme which we used for investigating the mass media in the preceding two chapters. That is, we will first investigate the use of explicitly religious symbols in efforts to proclaim to outsiders; and then we may consider communication efforts by means other than the use of explicitly religious symbols.

Let us clarify the difference between "explicit biblical symbols" and "the biblical message conveyed in secular symbols." The first of these terms refers to the use of the familiar categories and figures of the Bible offered at face value. The second refers to an attempt to extract the meaning from the conventional biblical categories and figures and to re-express this meaning in a point of contact terminology drawn from the experience of the audience. The point of contact, of course, will turn out to be in the apologist's presentation a point of conflict with the nonbiblical values of the recipient.

This difference may be illustrated by the efforts of certain church groups to communicate biblical truths to the younger generation. I think immediately of the National Methodist Youth Convocation held in the summer of 1959 at Purdue University. One of the dramatic programs included an attempt to translate the biblical picture of man into twentieth-century terms. Joseph's mistreatment at the hand of his brothers, for example, was translated into a wild West skit with characters drawn from the television show "Gunsmoke." Later I heard a Methodist agency official suggest that Methodist youth didn't need any more reminders of "Gunsmoke" or other TV Westerns; but I think he missed the point. To the student who witnessed this little vignette at Purdue, the net result was to condemn the "Gunsmoke" mentality in our society—to identify the tough Western marshal with the perennial pugnacity of men toward their erring or different brothers throughout history.

We should also distinguish between the principles of apologetics involved here and the principle of "demythologizing" which has been made an issue in modern theology by Rudolf Bultmann.[2] Bultmann's point is that the biblical categories have become obsolete in our scientific age and therefore simply incredible to the modern man. The idea of hell, for example, no longer can be accepted as a place beneath our feet; nor can the idea of heaven, to intelligent twentieth-century men, be thought of any more as a place above us in a spatial sense. Bultmann wishes to retranslate the biblical myth into existentialist categories which will speak to moderns. My point is quite different. I do not want to get rid of the biblical categories as being too strange, outmoded, or incredible; I wish to get rid of them (when dealing with outsiders) because they are too familiar. They are so easily identified with nominal Christianity that their net effect is to confirm the illusion of commitment and to arrest the recipient's self-awareness at that point.

The Pictorial Media

Religious journalism seemed an appropriate medium to study when we investigated the independent use of religious symbols by mass media. Now we have turned to the use of religious symbols by church movements; religious television and film production seem to make unusually good subjects for us now. For with the pictorial media, the origin of symbols is usually revealed with great clarity. This is so because of the necessity of presenting ideas in graphic form, reduced to essential details.[3]

In 1956 the Southern Baptist Convention launched an ambitious program to present religious programs on television. Two facts about this project make it worth our attention. First, the films took as subject matter some of the well-known parables of the New Testament—the Rich Fool, the Prodigal Son, the parable of the Sower, the saying about the pearl of great price. Second, the films took as their objective the evangelization of the outsider.

If the films had been produced in the conventional style, they would have portrayed biblical scenes with robe-clad figures speaking from behind their beards in the archaic language of the King James Bible. The Convention's Radio and Television Commission, however, evinced a better understanding of the apologetic task before them than that. The film based on the story of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-20), for example, portrays a twentieth-century family. The father is shown as a factory owner who has made considerable money and reasons to himself that he ought to expand production and thus make even more. Perhaps the film attempts a premature shortcut in that the factory owner discovers that he has a malaise or sickness that can be cured—only by reading Luke's account of the Rich Fool! In addition, the Commission insists with a somewhat heavy hand that "the plan of salvation must be woven into each plot," possibly attempting to demand more of a purely apologetic effort than the medium of television is equipped to bear.

Despite its tendency to oversimplify the process of securing outsiders and the probably negative effect such films would have on a great many sophisticated people, the effort nevertheless shows considerable awareness on the part of Southern Baptists of the real problems of apologetics where pictorial mass media are to be used. "The half-hour programs are of great importance," a news release from Baptist Press states, "since they will reach many people in the free and easy atmosphere of the home, people who, you might say, 'never darken the door of a church.' " The producers of the film did not make the usual assumption found among church-proclaimers that their message would have the same appeal to the outsiders as it does to the insiders. They took into account the live possibility that listeners "have the liberty of turning the dial to another television channel or turning off the set completely. Also they can leave the set on but pay little attention to what it presents."

Three years later the Southern Baptists were referring to this movement as a "televangelism" project, and it had attained enough notoriety to win a sympathetic account in the television-radio section of the *New York Times.*

By 1959 another of our largest denominations, The Methodist Church, had also become aware of the pitfalls which lie in wait for the religious group which attempts to proclaim its faith by "filming the message of the Bible." Here are some of the pitfalls which a committee investigating this use of films reported:

> The tendency to neglect "normal" experiences in the lives of Bible people in favor of the highly dramatic, such as the miracles presented literally.
>
> A dependence on pageantry rather than on true drama in portraying biblical material, resulting in a "wooden" effect.
>
> A superficial presentation of Bible content, based on (a) an unsatisfactory concept of inspiration, (b) the "easy way out" of using a literal interpretation and the actual words of the Bible (in the King James translation!), and (c) a desire to get the widest possible sale of these materials.
>
> A failure to aim at enlarging our understanding of the Bible and to confront us with its challenge. *The usual approach is to confirm people in their present feeling about the Bible and to make them feel "good" because they are learning about the Bible. This is usually achieved at the lowest common denominator—through visual transliteration.*[4]

The committee's grasp of the need for avoiding explicit symbols with half-committed audiences is even more fully demonstrated in its suggestions for possible approaches to production of biblical films. The committee recommends the following approaches, among others:

> Dramatic presentation of Bible situations in contemporary forms (dress, settings, etc.)
>
> Interpretive presentation of Biblical myth and folklore.
>
> We must begin at the point of the meaning of the Biblical truth presented (and not simply with the "story"). In some situations we would visualize the story; in others we would not visualize it.

Finally, the committee pronounced a much-needed verdict on the character of most biblical films which are available to churches today:

> We are convinced that there is no merit in the continued production of mediocre Bible films. In fact we should like to call for a moratorium on the production of additional Bible films such as are now available.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether television and films will ever be completely suitable as apologetic media. The efforts we have just reviewed are most hopeful in their early stages. Yet the visual means of communication raise considerable theological problems of their own. Any attempt to picture the miracles of the biblical saga will always risk the danger of falling back on what the Methodist committee calls "visual transliteration." When the story of Jesus making water out of wine is to be pictured, for example, the risk is that Jesus will be presented as a mere wonder-worker, a magician. Yet the alternate solution —to attempt to convey the truth of this story via contemporary situations—will always run the risk of falling short of the mystery of faith; even more certainly it will always be opposed by the unimaginative, both clerical and lay, who have any voice in church councils. The British Broadcasting Company once presented the Passion play on television with Christ pictured as "a young man with an Elvis Presley haircut, scuffed loafers and worn jeans." Pontius Pilate, "suave and courteously detached in a well-pressed lounge suit, nonchalantly lighted a cigarette after he signed Christ's death warrant." The familiar events became painfully alive in this re-creation, perhaps too much so; and there were churchmen as well as TV critics who asked: "Is the Church in the queue with the rest of the pitchmen who clamor for our attention?" [5]

The most sincere attempt to proclaim an authentic word of faith by pictorial methods risks becoming, at the point of reception, a deploying influence, mere "optical experience." Religious pictures too often provoke admiration instead of action. Films have the principal result of creating curiosity (*Neugier*), Heidegger's suggestive analysis leads us to suppose, impelling the recipient to enter into experiences without taking the trouble to make them really his own. The cinema affords an imaginative entry into the gay vista of Hollywood. The action movie lets the listener have excitement and even be a vicarious hero.[6] As with certain religious radio programs reported on by Parker and associates, it is conceivable that religious television and films, when they deal too directly with the explicit symbols of religion (or perhaps under all circumstances) may offer a "fireside outlet" for the religious urges of those beyond the church and may "unintentionally on occasion offer them a justification for avoiding actual church responsibilities." [7]

Visual media, by their superior technical merit, can readily impart a richer knowledge about Christ, a more edifying idea of his times, a more satisfying conception of his physiognomy. But these superiorities may be precisely the danger. A picture can be so satisfying, especially if it confirms what the recipient thinks is already an adequate Christianity for his part, that he is demotivated from any urge to act toward deeper commitment. Whatever can be made attractive by techniques can be accepted without decision or risk. But the New Testament calls upon us to commit ourselves to that which cannot necessarily be praised for its aesthetic qualities or appearance. Television and other complex electronic media undoubtedly have a vital place in the church's communication program. Yet their very superiorities over the older media may become the means of inoculating the outsider against active entry into Christian faith—especially if the conventional, accepted symbols of religion are relied on very heavily in the TV or film presentation. The church must and should continue to use these media; yet it must remember that with them it risks becoming the purveyor of material that corresponds religiously to pornographic literature.

The use of the explicit symbols of religion may be possible with the *insider* at reduced risk; for the religious adherent who is serious about his faith is less an embarrassment when confirmed in his intent than is the religious dabbler who is confirmed in his illusions.

While religious films and television productions are the most dramatic means by which the church attempts to speak to outsiders, they are not the only means. We can with profit investigate two more channels by which the church commonly attempts to make use of accepted religious symbols in speaking to the outsiders of our time. One of these is evangelism, and the other is a movement which we shall call, for want of a better name, "language simplification."

Evangelism

We have previously noticed the presence of a syndicated column by the evangelist Billy Graham in numerous daily newspapers. But Mr. Graham's chief means of access to the American public are his evangelistic crusades in various cities. Making use of all the mass media—newspaper publicity and advertising, radio programs, telecasts of his crusade sessions—Graham has assiduously proclaimed a message of Christian faith to the American public, and his efforts are conspicuous in their use of the accepted religious symbols.

Graham's faith in the accepted symbols is well illustrated in an encounter between him and a homeless bum whom Graham found sitting in a doorway on the Bowery in Manhattan. As a news magazine relates the episode:

The neat young stranger approached an unshaven old one. "Hello there," he said. "I'm Billy Graham."

"Beat it."

"You have a problem," Billy said. "You won't accept God."

"Gimme a dime, will you? I'm hungry."

Billy Graham gave him a dime, and the Rev. Dan Potter, executive director of the New York City Protestant Council, suggested that Graham move on to another group of derelicts.[8]

Though this episode tends toward caricature, it does suggest the absence of what we have called a point of contact in Mr. Graham's approach to the outsider. Anxious to reach non-Christians and nonchurchgoers, fully convinced of the efficacy of mass communications media, Graham perhaps symbolizes the approach of most church groups of today to their audiences beyond the church. His sermons to the people, as he himself seemed to concede about his New York crusade in 1957, may reach unprecedented numbers but not have a lasting effect on them. As Graham described the New York crusade to a press conference, it was "the biggest crusade we have ever had," but still "not the deepest, of course, or the one with the most lasting effect. Just the biggest in terms of people."

Generally speaking, the results of this crusade, considering Graham's vocabulary of accepted religious symbols, were about what we should expect: Less than 10 per cent of those who made commitments as a result of hearing the revivalist preach were previously unaffiliated with any church. Moreover, *Time* reported, after a "random check" of churches, that New York city's permanent population of Protestants was not significantly affected. Querying thirty-seven of the city's 1,700 Protestant churches, the magazine reported that three churches had a total of eight new members, and two others had "a slight increase in attendance." *Time* went on to say:

> No spiritual event can ever be wholly represented in statistics or evaluated at the time it happens. The impact of Graham's preaching may bear immeasurable fruit months and years hence, in unforeseen

ways. But at present, in concrete, reportable terms, Crusader Graham's effect on the big city is negligible.[9]

Comparing Dwight L. Moody and Billy Graham, Jerald Brauer points out that the two evangelists preached similar messages but with a difference in method. Graham ostensibly had great advantage over Moody in that better techniques of mass communication were open to him. Graham could depend on radio, television, newspapers, and magazines and approach an unprecedented audience of millions; however, his reliance on mass media may be the very reason, Brauer suggests, why Graham has not made so profound and far-reaching an appeal as Moody. Millions heard Graham, "but there was no evidence that his impact on Protestantism was either permanent or deep." [10]

Again, referring to his San Antonio rally in July, 1958, Graham said of the three thousand who came forward (the largest number to do so up to that time at any of his American meetings): "That signalized to me that television has given us a penetration that radio has never accomplished." He told a *New York Times* reporter that if Christ should appear today he would use television.[11]

At the press conference following his 1957 New York crusade, Graham declared: "St. Paul didn't have television. We can reach more people by TV probably than the population of the world was then."

In some of his most recent writings, however, Graham appears to read a more sober conclusion out of his experience with the mass media. Now he is "not sure" television is a medium the evangelist can use "continually." He has discovered there is a "saturation point" easily reached among television viewers for the crusader who makes use of this medium "week after week." People are not "slaves" to their sets any more.[12]

Another reason for the indifference which Graham encounters among outsiders is undoubtedly his use of accepted biblical symbols. Here are some samples of his style.

During the 1957 Madison Square Garden Crusade in New York City:

> I'm going to ask every one of you tonight to say: "Billy, I will give myself to Christ, as Saviour and Lord. I want to be born again. I want a new life in Christ. I want to be a new creation in Christ tonight. I'm willing to come to the Cross in repentance."

On the Jack Paar show, December 24, 1959, during a reading of the Christmas story:

> We don't have room for Jesus today. . . . We don't receive Christ. . . . Today Jesus can change a person's heart and bring peace. . . . Everyone who comes to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior will have joy and peace.

As a *New York Times* reporter observed, a handsome, forceful speaker obviously convinced about his faith in the Bible will be bound to draw numerous and enthusiastic responses. His determination to use explicitly biblical symbols may thus only heighten the persuasiveness of his proclamation, especially for those in search of external religious authority in their lives. During the campaign Graham vigorously affirmed faith in the Bible as "God's inspired word," rejecting attempts of biblical scholars to interpret it or place it in critical perspective: "My job is simply to proclaim the Gospel, and to let the Spirit of God apply in the individual hearts." Even with this formidable combination of appeals in mind, however, we must raise the question whether revival methods, after all, offer hope to church movements which would win outsiders to Christian faith. Has Billy Graham done no more than convince outsiders of the obscurantism and backwardness of orthodox Christian faith? Has he done no more than rally and confirm nominal Christians in their illusions of commitment? It would be rash indeed to make these judgments about his preaching. Yet his use of accepted symbols, his refusal to interpret these symbols into the terms of modern anxiety, his great faith in the technique of television, all these factors combine to throw in question the profundity and long-range effect of his evangelism. Unquestionably, he has been the agent of redemption for scores; but at the same time, he has perhaps failed to reach millions with any lasting message. Could Billy Graham have convinced more people of their need of the Gospel if he had sought a secular "point of contact" in the manner of Justin Martyr or Tertullian? Unfortunately, that is a question we must leave to speculation for an answer.

Language Simplification

Churches habitually err in apologetics by projecting the accepted symbols and categories outward, where they fall to the earth, deprived of the inner authority which the biblical and churchly traditions give them among adherents. The problem is the difficulty of communicating discontinuous churchly symbols. Jesus, when faced with this same problem, unhesitatingly reached into secular life for *new* symbols. When he likens the kingdom of heaven to a "pearl of great price," for example, he has set aside ecclesiastical categories and has seized upon a commercial symbol—all in order to remain true in his speech to the transcendence of God's promises. Modern-day church leaders, however, instead of attempting to reconvey the message of transcendence by resort to the fresh although secular, are more likely to try to refurbish somehow the old, biblical symbols. The temptation is all the greater now because of progress in linguistic science. The church has joined many modern uplift groups as an enthusiastic backer of various language simplification movements of the last thirty years. One of the projects within this general realm is the *readability reform*. A second is the new interest in popular *semantics*.

This process of restoring, simplifying, "making understandable" old symbols has its vital place in educational efforts of the church. The great temptation, however, is to refurbish the old symbols by reducing them from symbols to signs.

An interesting example of the linguistic reform movement within the religious arena is the development of "literacy journalism" techniques under the aegis of missionary education. Under the leadership of Frank C. Laubach and others, illiterate native peoples are converted, via simplified linguistics, to the status of "new literates," or *marginal* literates. Such diverse institutions as the Hartford Theological Foundation, the Syracuse University School of Journalism (which offers advanced study in religious journalism), and Scarritt College for Christian Workers now list courses in literacy journalism and similar subjects. It is not our purpose to judge the effectiveness of such projects among non-Western peoples. We aim here only to consider language simplification as a domestic mode of apologetics.

Readability reform is an offshoot of educational psychology, and, like other by-products of this discipline, it has had great impact on contemporary religious leaders. Research into the factors of readability was inspired by the work of Columbia University's late Edward L. Thorndike. The most successful exponent of readability techniques has been Rudolf Flesch, who showed that he can practice what he preaches by turning his Teachers College doctoral dissertation into a readable book about readability, *The Art of Plain Talk*. This volume and a following one, *The Art of Readable Writing*, have had a notable effect on American journalism.[13] One of the happiest results has been to reintroduce the concept of common sense into news writing.[14]

Few big-time publishing houses would think of proceeding without some form of readability research or criteria. The Encyclopaedia Brittannica, for example, when it readies manuscript for its junior edition (aimed at juvenile readers) subjects each article to a going-over from experienced "simplifiers." "Each original manuscript for *Britannica Junior*—whether by Roscoe Pound, former dean of the Harvard Law School, on 'Law,' by Emily Post on 'Etiquette,' or by Vihjalmur Stefansson, the Arctic explorer, on 'Eskimo,' " says a writer of the history of the Encylopedia, "is turned over to a staff of eight 'text simplifiers' for examination in accord with established principles of vocabulary for the grade-school child." [15]

Plain language is always preferable to obscure language, and when churchly writers may be shown the way to clarity, that is all to the good. Indeed, Protestant theology ought to have a doctrine called "the need for language simplification." Such founders as Luther and Wesley believed it their duty as ministers of the gospel to write as clearly and as simply as possible, and in the vernacular, for the Word of God is to be made accessible to all.[16] Anyone having a serious message serves his cause better by coming back to "the simplest words," as Marcel suggests in a mild criticism of Heidegger's startling vocabulary of existentialist nounce-words.[17]

Yet in the practice of Luther, we must note, language simplification was a *result* of the word of God's vitality rather than a *cause* of it. Luther could speak at all because he took the word of God to be a living phenomenon, seeking to find an outlet in the ordinary earthly language of men; he did not consider this divine word, moreover, as dependent in any way on his personal literary genius, not even his genius at simplified expression. Modern proponents of writing theory, however, often appear to act on the latter assumption, that it is a forceful, simple style, brought as the fruit of a reform to an essentially obscure subject matter, that returns the subject matter to life and enables it to claim the attention of men. With this one-sided confidence in style sometimes goes the Greek theory that if a man knows the good, he will do it. And so the readability yardstick—a multiple regression formula predictive of stylistic factors correlated significantly with comprehension—is turned into a simple technique of progress. If a given project is presented in sufficiently simple language, almost any number of takers for the project may be secured upon having everyone read about it.

In churchly hands, the readability formula thus can all too easily become a Trojan horse—ostensibly a gift to apologetics but in reality its enemy.

Manifestly, one of the objects of readability work is to promote a simple, understandable style of writing. Is this not in principle at least the putting of the biblical message into the language of the recipient—a necessity for which we have been arguing all along as a principle of good apologetics? When the principles of readability research are indeed incorporated into the task of *communicating the biblical message by means of secular symbols,* we can count it as friend. The ordinary usage of this technique, however, is for diametrically the opposite purpose, i.e., to *convert biblical or churchly symbols into secular messages.* The reader will recall from our study of second-century apology that this very difference was what set the apologists Tertullian and Justin Martyr off from such Gnostic theologians as Valentinus. Tertullian and Justin seized upon secular categories in order to talk about the Christian God. Valentinus seized upon biblical categories in order to talk about gnostic aeons. The modern advocate of "readable writing" who speaks as an interpreter of churchly lore is all too likely to follow the pattern of Valentinus rather than that of Justin.

It is a question of the "flow of meaning" associated with a symbol. In the hands of the true apologist *biblical* meaning flows into his symbols. In the hands of the Gnostic *secular* meaning flows into his symbols.

A few years ago I served a brief time as editor of three youth periodicals produced by the Methodist Board of Education. At the time I joined the staff, nearly all of the editors were astir with plans to improve the readability of the periodicals. The lone exception was one fellow youth editor, who likened Dr. Flesch's readability formula to "666" and other horrors of the Apocalypse.

Upon my arrival I found my desk loaded with mimeographed reports about the readability of our magazines, or the lack of it. One mimeographed report, fresh in from a school of journalism which had been asked to study our periodicals, suggested a list of phrase simplifications. Wherever we referred to "Holy Scriptures," for example, we were supposed to substitute "Bible." Wherever "divine Providence" came up, we were advised to replace this phrase with "belief that God exists" (which doesn't quite fit, either syntactically or theologically).

Some of the proposed substitutions were harmless, some were helpful, and a great many were steps in the direction of the secularizing which I have just described.

To name some of the more questionable suggestions, we were advised to substitute "Jesus" for "Christ," "acting as Jesus acted" for "Christian personalities," "interested in being a good person" for "hunger for righteousness."

In every case, the suggestion contemplates keeping the *accepted religious image*—only with the thought that it should be "simplified" for real "clarity." The truth is, however, that the "simplification" in each case reduces the biblical meaning. In the case of "Jesus" as a substitute for "Christ," for example, the analyst was concerned only to preserve the picture of the religious personage who founded Christianity—that is, the literal person. Since "Christ" as a name for this person has obscure ramifications today, the analyst suggested dropping this title in favor of the simply human "Jesus." This is a reduction from biblical symbol to humanist sign.

True apologetics would proceed by quite another course. The writer would begin at the same place, by admitting the obscurity of the notion "Christ." Then he would begin to struggle with the transcendent meaning of this notion which makes it so hard to communicate, rather than be content with the historical person minus this transcendence. He would delve into secular lore, perhaps, for a way of symbolizing the notion of "incarnation." He would seek to replace the fallen biblical symbol with a fresh secular symbol, or if you will, the biblical myth with a secular myth. He would thus intend to preserve the biblical truth by resorting to secular symbol, whereas the school of journalism analyst seeks to preserve the biblical image by getting rid of its mythical truth, leaving the symbol in the end only an empty shell (i.e., the human Jesus) which is then easily translatable into out-and-out empirical or humanistic categories.

We could follow a similar analysis for some of the other proposed substitutions. Let us take the suggestion that "interested in being a good person" be substituted for "hunger for righteousness." To the journalistic eye, these expressions are no doubt virtual equivalents, the chief difference between them being the slightly archaic quality of the biblical phrase. The important question is, what notion or idea ought to be conveyed by the biblical phrase? Even casual reflection reveals that in the Beatitudes, Jesus aims at directing his listeners towards more than simply being "good persons." The whole drift of these "keys to blessedness" is that God offers us help and goodness which we cannot manufacture or drum up for ourselves. But the expression "interested in being a good person" strips the beatitude of this transcendent meaning and reduces it immediately to exactly what Jesus is saying it is not: a human possibility.

Once again, then, we see how the drive toward simplification has the net result of preserving the shell or objective appearance of the accepted biblical category, while emasculating it of its inner meaning, viz., its pointing beyond itself. Into the inner vacancy thus created, the journalist inserts a nonmythical statement of human ethical possibilities.

The true apologist, on the other hand, would reason that the obscurity of this phrase lay in the mythical notion which informs the symbol of righteousness, the notion that the only kind of "righteousness" which can actually be satisfied is the kind that comes from beyond, from God. This, of course, is to say one must have a thirst that is far beyond a mere thirst for being good. The apologist's real task is to hang onto the transcendence and seek a new, clear symbol out of the symbol set of his adherents which can be used to point to this transcendence afresh. In the case of this beatitude, the apologist would come nearer to the real meaning of the original phrase by translating it: "*not* interested in being a good person." For that at least would keep the possibility open for talking about the real center of meaning, i.e., God's righteousness instead of our own.

Another part of the journalists' study of church periodicals leads us to a second problem with the language simplification movement: that is the tendency to consider style and content as separate entities. The journalists rewrote sections of the religious periodicals on the assumption that "the style, not the subject matter, was the purpose for re-writing." This assumption simply reinforces all the difficulties we have already talked about. That is, it contributes to the opinion that the biblical message needs some kind of streamlining, but that it can be left intact in its "essentials."

A group of rural church consultants who examined denominational curriculum materials described the primary obstacle between the church and reception of its message as the difficult language of the materials. "Again and again," a semiofficial report observes, "the group emphasized the idea that the utmost simplicity is needed if the gospel is to be communicated effectively to either youth or adults." The group's recommendation for meeting this need dealt almost entirely with modifications of writing style or of periodical format.

This falls short of comprehending the genuine task of apology, which can never be content to find simple ways of putting the old verities; the apologist must search for *new myths* and symbols which will be the vehicles of the old verities; and this is far more complicated than cleaning up the style of the archaic biblical message.

Such studies as these can be highly valuable to the church. They help to serve notice on all religious communicators that the word of God is rightly an understood word. Too often, however, they are made to yield a specious conclusion that the word of God is dependent for its efficacy on communicators who have mastered the techniques of readability.

Readability studies can also be made the basis of a false implication about the *reception* of religious truth. This is the suggestion that hearing God's word is a question of comprehension rather than of decision and that the responsibility of the recipient is to acquire information rather than make a commitment. Such is easily the conclusion to which a denomination is likely to come when it takes too seriously studies which purport to demonstrate "what educational background would be required in order for an individual to read these periodicals most helpfully." Understanding the word is part of receiving it, but the word is more than an intellectual content to be comprehended. Hearing the word requires decision and commitment, in addition to comprehension.

Semanticists, too, have been greatly influential on the church in its recent approaches to communication. They have pointed out that misunderstandings over the meanings of words occasion a great deal of conflict among individuals, groups, and nations. They come forward with the idea of "referential" language as a cure for the difficulties attending the unguarded use of abstractions and emotive statements. They rightly criticize the ambiguities of language in such disciplines as the social sciences and the humanities.[18] The notion of a *referent* which is somehow verifiable reduces religious language to the empirical husks of symbols, makes proclamation center only in that which may be seen, touched, measured, or otherwise publicly agreed upon. This has the net result, as we have just seen in our examination of readability reform, of preserving the accepted symbols but of emasculating them of their reason-for-being.

As a tool of linguistic analysis, semantic study can serve a genuine, even necessary, purpose. "Finding the referent" is a desirable undertaking for anyone who wishes to speak, write, and think accurately, but it can never take the place of deciding in favor of the transcendent help and hope which is offered men through the symbols of biblical faith.

The church has turned to readability reform and other linguistic devices as crutches—and sometimes panaceas—for its deficiencies in proclamation. Without implying that all movements in the direction of simplifying are bad, we can say that the apologetic task is often sold short by the church's effort to refurbish and streamline the accepted religious symbols. Whatever the church's method of seeking the outsider, one piece of evidence is increasingly clear: the use of explicitly religious symbols already familiar to the audience does not lead to proclamation;

rather, it leads to something which may be described as very nearly the opposite.

The Use of Explicit Religious Symbols by Laymen

The abuse of Christian symbols by their promulgation as authoritative to outsiders reaches its apex in the language of the well-intentioned Christian layman. Except for *literati* who are well enough educated in the humanities to be able to interpret Christian symbols according to the literary (and therefore non-literal) norms of biblical liberalism, the layman will always expound—and hear—biblical language by the canons of a kind of diluted, peaceful fundamentalism. That is, the presupposition of literal truth will determine his attitude toward any given symbol. The result may well be, in some cases, to drive him away from Christianity since its truth in any detailed, literal sense is so offensive to modern intellects as to make forsaking of the faith often preferable to acceptance of its symbols. For example, the middle-class atheist has usually arrived at his position by this route. He presupposes the literal truth of the symbols; he does not have the imagination to undertake some other kind of vindication of their merit; he has no choice but to reject them.

In the kind of case which is of more interest to us, however, the layman insists more or less stubbornly, especially to the outsider, on the literal veracity of the symbols that are contained within the biblical message. He will set out to hold, for example, that Adam was a historical individual, or that Jesus' birth of a virgin was a matter falling within the scope of biology. He will insist, when discussing the work of Christ, that "salvation" is some kind of quasi-physical future destination for the personal center which is now housed within a body; and that one prudently secures a favorable accommodation by "believing on the name of the Lord Jesus." (He is not so likely in this age to dwell with precision on the destination of those who will *not* make this explicit commitment.)

This lay believer who promulgates accepted biblical symbols to his world, however, is still at peace with the world. He lives by the words of science and the deeds of technology. Hence he cannot be so crude and archaic as to speak of the biblical symbols as self-authenticating. He is a literalist who at the same time lives in a technical age. He has the morally urgent task, therefore, of finding an explanation for the symbols which he has already accepted and one which will not contradict the world view bequeathed him by technology.

At this point, the interests of the technical world impinge on the symbols themselves. The meaning of life comes from goods and good things, the achievements of money, time, position, and the quantity of friends. These items therefore enter the picture as explainers of the symbols.

Thus a Tennessee layman undertook to lay out to a convention of businessmen in Miami Beach the meaning of Christian ethics. The insistence that "ethical practices are always good business" was a predictable element of his address. Or as another layman explained at the same meeting, God never does anything but good things: "He is not the author of sin, sickness or disorder, but is the author of love, health, peace, and order." The biblical notion that to perish means to perish at the hands of God has long since been dropped in this kind of welfare-state theology.

The extreme form of the lay purveying of biblical symbols comes when sentimental literalism is combined with the realization that piety can be marketed. Lately there has been a rash of projects announced by "Christian businessmen" to build parks, museums, and the like devoted to commercial exploitation of accepted biblical symbols. In my own state of Tennessee, a group of entrepreneurs has announced plans to construct "Christus Biblical Gardens" which would include a statue of Christ larger than the Christ of the Andes. Though the express intention of the developers was to provide a Christian atmosphere equal to that of any church, entrance to this haven of Christianity was to be possible only by dint of a commercial consideration—an admission fee. In California, a $15,000,000 park on 220 acres east of Cucamonga was to bear the name "Bible Storyland" and to be devoted exclusively to dramatizing for the public the lore of the Bible. To be constructed in the shape of a heart (which would "symbolize God's love for humanity"), the park would contain areas designated as the Garden of Egypt, Rome, Ur, Israel, and Babylon. Visitors would be offered a "ride to heaven" on a gold litter, or a slide down the throat of Jonah's big fish. Children would be able to ride animals (two by two, of course) into a real ark.

The planners announced that the park would open on Easter Sunday of the year of its completion. Above all else, said the promoters, "Bible Storyland will be a happy place." [19]

The biblical categories are retained here in literal fashion—but no longer as symbols of God's Lordship; rather, they have become illustrations of man's ability to cut the cloth of divinity to suit himself. Alongside such outright conversions of the mysterious, illimitable biblical symbols into pragmatized secular signs, the so-called "atheistic" dangers of symbolic approaches to theology shrink to the vanishing point. It is only when the doctrine of God receives this kind of crass literal treatment that we begin to grasp what theologians like Tillich are getting at when they protest a god who is a "being alongside other beings."

Of course, by the time we come around to considering projects such as these parks, we are beyond the scope of church-centered efforts to seek outsiders. Yet there is a point to the reference, after all, because most of our churches are in fact run by laymen who are inclined to think of projects like this as being inherently numinous and worthy of pious collaboration. Christus Biblical Gardens, it goes without saying, would be considered by the average deacon to be a much more powerful (and precise) representation of the lineaments of Christianity than the doctrine of God of Paul Tillich. And the developer of Bible Storyland would rank as a much higher order of saint than Rudolf Bultmann, the developer of demythologizing.

I do not mean, however, to bar the layman from proclamation. Because he lives in a world of fresh secular symbols (which admittedly it rarely occurs to him to requisition for Christian purposes) he offers more potential as an apologist than does the clerk in holy orders. Justin Martyr was a layman, and our chances for a repetition of his success with outsiders lie preponderantly with our responsible laity. One way the clergy might help is to cease acting as if proclamation to the outside could be undertaken without new symbols—without the risk and anguish of communication.

The Use of Nonreligious Language

We must not fall into the narrow conception that all of the church's communication via mass media to the outsider consists in the conveying of explicit symbols of religion. Much of the churchly communication of our day is expressed in ordinary secular categories, and very often it is achieved for ordinary secular purposes.

Ancillary Publicizing

What we are now discussing are messages which render some kind of technical service to the church or the people but which do not in themselves embody God's word of judgment and grace. Everything from the church bulletin, which gives the title of next week's sermon and the time and place of women's circle meetings, to the minister's address to the Rotary Club on the Dead Sea Scrolls comes under this heading.

The most typical form of this kind of churchly communication is taken over from the secular discipline of publicity and public relations. When the church undertakes to speak through a public relations department, it is well advised to state its nonproclamatory goal plainly. I think a model statement was the resolution offered at the International Convention of Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in 1952, which led to the formation of a public relations agency for that denomination. Resisting the temptation to bill the plan as a means of revolutionizing proclamation or evangelism, the Christian Church in Waterloo, Iowa, which put forward the resolution, simply requested "more adequate education regarding the Disciples of Christ." It went on to point to the confusion which existed in lay minds about the proper functions of various church agencies within the denomination, and indeed the great confusion among Americans at large about the name of this denomination. (These Protestants call themselves both "Christian Churches" and "Disciples of Christ," and the International Convention uses both phrases in its title.) The resolution called for the proposed department to produce "small pieces of literature . . . in simple, understandable language, showing how our agencies have grown up; their division of service and their financial coordination; and what is being accomplished by them." It also called for the production of audio-visual materials and strengthened press relations.[20]

Approved by the convention, the resolution was put into effect in 1954 when Ralph C. Neill of Salem, Oregon, was called as Director of Public Relations for the International Convention. Mr. Neill then launched a program of service for the churches of his brotherhood which includes the filing of news releases about the Disciples to AP, UPI, Religious New Service, a selected list of daily newspapers, and the religious press of the Disciples brotherhood.

Can we take exception to this kind of church communication, seeing that it does not sail under false colors and pretend to be proclamation of the gospel itself? If we are committed to the proposition that the church manifests itself in society as an institution, then we must be willing to accept publicizing as one of the communication modes that the church uses. Once we admit the necessity of an institution publicity is perhaps as inevitable as the sacraments—although for a different reason. The sacraments aim at bringing God to us and redeeming, in the long run, our finitude. Publicity aims at leading the church out into the world and thus strengthening, over the short run, our finitude. The church is an institution that is suspended, so to speak, midway between heaven and earth, and these two entities—sacraments and publicity—serve it from opposite ends.

Yet, the publicity arm may be constitutionally blind to the sacramental arm—the theological realities of grace and judgment, especially judgment. It tends to view the church as a fellowship of worthies rather than as a corporation of sinners. The news is written in such a way that the reader sees the good and the large things about the workings of the denomination. It would be uneconomical to spend a great deal of money to tell the public how bad the brotherhood is. Thus even though the publicity arm does not claim to present the proclamation of the church, properly speaking, it may unintentionally provide background "static" which interferes with proclamation.

Another problem is that a public relations department, if it is technically competent in the conventional way, may succeed in defining "communication" as a matter of good techniques of self-promotion, especially by way of the press release. Public relations men rightly resist the idea that good public relations can depend on mere publicity techniques. Departments such as that of the Disciples of Christ contribute funds to the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches (or of their own denominations) and help underwrite the production of imaginative films and television programs. More than that, they see that public relations is a question of one's attitude, his sense of responsibility, his willingness to meet others halfway. According to Ralph Stoody, executive director of The Methodist Church's Commission on Public Relations and Methodist Information, public relations is the procedure "by which an institution becomes more widely and more favorably known to the public." Stoody claims that "good teachers and good teaching" are the best public-relations asset a church school can have, "and happy-hearted, faith-filled children are its best publicity agents." Nevertheless, in practice, this idealism generally breaks down—as it does for the directors of the Methodist and Disciples programs. The former, for example, uses most of the space in a folder on public relations to explain why the church school, despite its having "a keener sense of public relations values than any other department of church life," still needs publicity—and how to get it.

One of the ominous signs in the current religious revival, according to Daniel Jenkins, is that "so many Christian laymen's groups should be so largely composed of people in the advertising business." Christian action has nothing to do with seeing that the church gets "full credit for any work done." [21] Even when honesty and self-sacrifice are conscious goals, they often are not felt to be "validated" until they are made the most of via publicity.[22] When either the minister or the church wants attention for accomplishment, his primary purpose is obscured. The qualities that are the most Christian, Jenkins points out, are often the qualities that are more unspectacular.

> Patience, forbearance, moderation, and, above all, the undervalued virtue of the disciplined application of cold and honest intelligence, are infinitely more important than the ability to make a dramatic gesture or to make a quotable pronouncement.[23]

It is not going too far to say that Christianity still has room for martyrs—not of the body, as in the second century, but rather of the reputation in this age of publicity.

A third problem, closely related, is that successful publicity, by building up the church as an institution (a certain amount of which is necessary, as we have seen), may do so well at it that the more profound aspects of the church's existence are lost from view. Can we really have an easy conscience about the denomination which pays a public relations director to strengthen its good name and thereby harden the denominational lines? The church publicity director, if he is worth his salt, recognizes the danger here and constantly searches both his own soul and his methods. Moreover, many of these directors are positive that a denomination strengthened by good public relations procedures has more to offer the ecumenical movement than a weak, misunderstood one.

What is disturbing here, however, is the aggressive character which seems to lie at the heart of all successful publicizing. It is not unreasonable to suggest that modern publicity may be the contemporary sublimation of the primitive instinct of combat. The best publicists, according to a psychoanalytic study of editorial writers on a campus newspaper, the *Michigan Daily*, "will have strong needs to take active steps" to control their world. This kind of publicist, it is claimed, will want to be recognized as master, and, at the same time, to be protected from unfavorable reactions.[24]

Needless to say, I do not think my own friends in the religious publicity field present such domineering personalities to the world. Most of them I am inclined to condemn for their meekness. This, however, may only mean that the church as an institution is out of its proper sphere, fighting for power. In that case the whole publicity operation of the church is called into question as an operation which helps the church to be more strongly than ever what it is essentially not.

A fourth problem already hinted at is that publicity, however legitimately practiced as an ancillary communication activity, must not become the model for *preaching* (or counseling)—but the temptation to make it that is very great. From the moment one becomes preoccupied with the effect his actions are to have on others, says Marcel, the act loses its genuineness; we cease to communicate and begin to treat the listener "merely as a means of resonance or an amplifier." [25] Publicity can only talk; it is not a means of listening. Communication in the publicity mode, then, may represent a deliberate inversion of the minister's proper kind of speech to his congregation. When the church takes publicity as a model for *all* of its communication, we may be sure that it disenables itself from presenting itself to the world as a suffering servant or from commending self-sacrifice as a dominant Christian motif.

Christian leaders sometimes turn to publicity because they imagine a gap between the gospel and its communicability. This comes from defining the gospel by standards of human strength; and it is only natural after that to want to leap in, prepared to lend a helping hand via publicity efforts, to close the gap. God's word, however, as we are reminded by Luther, is not of this order of strength; by the world's standards, it is weakness. Yet it is strength of another kind that comes at the very point where human gap-closing machinery reveals itself as useless. It is a strength that comes to focus in what it gives us—but it does not give us possessions or honor or anything else that may be demonstrated or publicized, objectively.

These objections do not imply that the church has no need of publicity. They do imply that publicity is not a means of proclaiming the church's distinctive message, for the presuppositions on which publicizing is based, as we have just seen, are inverse to some of the motifs of Christian truth. Like religious journalism, publicity can be an auxiliary servant of the church insofar as the church is interested in building itself up as a public or commercial institution. It is within the context of this earthbound service of promotion and welfare that church publicity must be judged. Here the question simply becomes: how much good does the publicity do? How much help is it to ministers in administering their parish programs? How much useful information does it convey to the people? Often the critics of religious publicity do not pause long enough to make the distinction between proclamation and staff work, and they find themselves in company with the indiscriminate. For example, the *Christian Century*, virtually without qualification, condemned "prepackaged literature" which the boards and agencies of denominational headquarters are wont to send to ministers. Not all of this, the *Century* concedes, is entirely lacking in merit.

> But the proliferation of boards and bureaus has produced a startling increase in undesired helpfulness from the Bigger Brothers who want to see the Programs Produce. Perhaps there is too little of the Protestant ethic left in any of us in this day of abundance to protest the bureaucratic trend on grounds of waste. But is it too late to point to the folly of it all? [26]

The *Century* found itself quite unable to understand a large segment of Baptist ministers who reported they didn't mind receiving mail from boards and agencies of their denomination, and actually found it helpful. The magazine suggested that ministers save such mail for three months, weigh the total amount, "then weigh the portion of the mail which has been sufficiently significant to cause them to do something or to say something they would not have done or said had it not arrived."

Such criticism is correct in that it points out the existence of bureaucratic waste in the operations of large denominations. Yet it is a flight from history to suggest that the church can exist these days without assuming some kind of institutional form cognate for religion with the big institutions of other realms of life. It exists, not apart from the flow of history, but within it. So a certain amount of mail from headquarters is inevitable, right, proper, and helpful. Conscientious religious publicists are the first to admit there is probably *too much* mail from headquarters—but only in the same sense, precisely, that there is too much advertising in the *Christian Century*.

We must conclude, then, that church publicity is both necessary and dangerous. Like original sin, it shows us how the church may hang on to empirical existence in a cutthroat world, and it convicts us, by its very success, of wishing to live by bread alone. Its chief danger lies in the temptation it offers to proclaimers; but it is also dangerous when it is fulfilling its necessary and legitimate role as promoter of the church as institution, for the church is an institution only as a lesser mode of existence. It needs to cease all efforts to promote its basic message as if that were a promotable commodity; it needs to find new things in common with the people it imagines to exist at a communicative remove. On the other hand, if religion is not to be restricted to a priestly caste, it has to become a universal possibility—not a possibility that is merely understood spiritually, but one that depends on empirical reality which uses humanistic and scientific knowledge, the techniques of mass communications, public education, mass literacy, and intellectual freedom. Not that the religious communicator can be finally satisfied with publicity, for the church must do more than merely place attractive information about itself, or even about God, in everyone's hands. Christian publicity must finally decrease in order that proclamation may increase, for the ultimate benefit religion confers on men is not welfare but "generic human inwardness."

Antiproclamation

So far we have talked about two kinds of churchly communication. One uses accepted Christian symbols and claims to be proclamation. (The fact that such communication does not often make for authentic apology is not the point at this juncture.) The other uses secular symbols and claims not to be proclamation—we have called it rather "publicity." The third is somewhere in between: it uses secular symbols and passes for proclamation—but it resorts for its ultimates to the standards of ordinary commercial journalism. This kind of communication we must call "antiproclamation," since it often deflects the recipient from the difficulties of Christian faith by proposing to allay anxieties (in the same manner, e.g., as advertising and other commercial media in Chapter VI).

What is the difference between this "anti-proclamation" and the material I have just finished discussing under the heading of publicity? There may be none insofar as the words and paragraphs go. The difference resides largely within the claim made for the subject matter by the churchly authorities who sponsor it. Consider, for example, the following paragraph, which I lift from the pages of a church newspaper, omitting only a surname to respect an individual's privacy:

> The Rev. J. E. B——————, or "Rev. Jim," as he signs himself, continues to make a hit. . . . In a summary of his annual report, Brother Jim lists a few of the things accomplished as $4,332 raised for various benevolences; a record-breaking Sunday-school enrollment; installation of a new lighted bulletin board; hearing aids in the sanctuary; an amplification system; an organ for one of the class rooms; a tape recorder which quickly proved its worth to the choir; and a new rug for the parsonage.

Several facts stand out about this paragraph. First, it is not commercial journalism, in source at least, for it is the product of a church. Second, its vernacular is very much that of commercial journalism, mixing the tone of the "gossip column" or chatty society page with the declamatory spirit of the press release. Third, it resembles in the strongest way two of the genres of communication we have already analyzed: (1) ordinary "religious journalism," and (2) religious publicizing. The quoted paragraph, in direct purpose as an element of a conference paper, serves as a historical record of temporal achievement. As such it contributes to the promotion of the church as an institution and may thus make a claim to be classified as legitimate ancillary churchly communication.

Let us go one step further below the surface, however, as we examine this paragraph. Does it not remind us of the approach to substance which we noticed in advertising (Chapter VI)? That is, the statement, in content, is informed by the concept that having substance is a satisfying goal for life, and it makes no movement toward placing the recipient in a boundary situation by pointing out the ultimate uselessness of substance.

Furthermore, what if the journal out of which the paragraph comes goes into the homes of its readers under the label of a proclamatory journal? In that case, the statement must be judged as a statement about salvation rather than as one about the temporal state of the institutional church, and its view of substance immediately ranks it with the nonreligious counsels about life which we found to inform the arguments of all commercial advertising. It fails utterly at the first requirement, which is that it should be serious about the human situation.

To be sure, this paragraph is considerably clumsier than most commercial advertising, and its exploitation of substance-anxiety is, to say the least, amateurish. Thus it is perhaps not so dangerous as the commercial journalism which we have already analyzed. And yet—I must repeat—what if it goes forth under the claim of its journal that it is one item among many which all add up to proclamation? This claim is not rare or exceptional; much, if not most, of the church press likes to think of itself as "advancing the Kingdom."

A notable trend in recent religious publishing has been the adoption of new periodicals which live up to general-magazine standards, both in physical appearance and in content. When we do not consider the proclamatory claims which these magazines habitually make, their articles easily pass muster as serviceable features written in the vein of good magazine journalism. Such publications perform a variety of instrumental functions for the church and its members, both active and inactive. For the adherents these magazines offer a feeling of unity within the denomination of togetherness. For outsiders the magazines frequently act as an attracting agent. For example, one denomination describes its monthly family magazine as an organ devoted to "advancing the cause of Christ and his kingdom," which "strives to extend the ministry of your local church."

What of the articles in these magazines? They record history. They offer entertainment. They satisfy curiosity. They provide social and avocational know-how. They promote the reputation of the denomination. They inspire with devotional material. And, let it be said, they occasionally engage in proclamation.

It must also be said, however, that most of these articles run counter in their main stresses to the motifs of apologetic proclamation. They advance basically the same solution to existential need or anxiety as commercial journalism and advertising. An article in a denominational monthly on how Americans will live in twenty years accepts having substance as an answer to needs. An article on how to invite guests makes the same assumption about social anxieties. The message of all such writings is to the effect that anxieties may be allayed. This approach is by now a familiar clue to us. It is essentially an antievangelical answer to the epochal despair of modern Americans. Instead of accepting anxiety as a part of finitude and affirming the Christian way of hope and courage as an antidote to despair, this approach proposes the simple and illusory solution of forgetting the anxieties. It contrasts with the approach of the classical apologists, who found in pagan needs a point of contact that placed the need in perspective as a shortcoming before God. It is not too much to say that such communication as we have just been examining comes short of apology because it substitutes human assurances about anxiety instead of portraying dread. This single substitution means, to Heidegger, the difference between authentic writing and the irresponsible spread of "scribbling." Dread isolates the individual, leaves him no place to turn as a way of forgetting his responsibility. But scribbling obscures the truth and overwhelms character; it becomes accepted not because it tells people what they should hear, but because it tells them what they want to hear.[27]

I repeat with emphasis: Such journalism, promulgated under the modest claim that it is publicity and not proclamation, is of great value to the institutional church. It is a means of promoting the physical and financial sides of empirical Christianity, of extending the reputation of denominations, of entertaining and performing instrumental services to the readers. There is a valid place for all this and no one can criticize publicity activity when it is done openly and with competence. We must criticize, however, in the strongest terms the identification—explicit or implicit—of this ancillary service as "proclamation." When put forth under the claim that it is evangelistic or apologetic material, it actually becomes a sort of antiproclamation which bears a message that is the polar opposite of the gospel. When this claim is made, its proclaimer may render himself guiltworthy on the charge of falsely allaying anxieties instead of affirming them frankly; of tacitly presenting substance, reputation, and human achievement as answers to despair instead of causes of it; and above all, of picturing Christianity as a form of entertainment or benefit that apparently does not involve endurance.

The Symbolic Environment

In past studies of religious language and symbolism, far too little attention has been paid to the environment or milieu in which sacred symbols are immersed. Studies of symbols taken from earlier cultures do not stress symbolic environment because the cultures were more homogeneous, and the symbols were suspended, for communicative purposes, in a medium suited to their purposes. In modern culture, however, the communicative channel, even if it is church owned and operated, is likely to present a broad spectrum capable of transmitting symbols of varying purpose and background. We have already encountered this diversity of symbols in Chapter V, where we considered the fate of religious symbols which were set adrift in newspapers, television programing, and other channels of great spectrum width. Even though we have now turned to church-operated communicative channels, the problem of symbolic environment is not less marked. The typical religious publication—a Methodist Conference "advocate," let us say, or a Baptist convention newspaper, or a Presbyterian newsletter, or the synodical organ of a Lutheran group—is very often a strange mixture of contrasting symbols. It may consist, to be sure, largely of avowed proclamation and of what we have called publicizing. It is, however, also likely to include at least some reporting of outside news, even if it is only religious news. The most pious publications will be found to open their columns to advertising—secular in manner if not in the products vended. Finally, some of the avowed proclamatory content of a religious communication channel, as we have just seen, properly deserves to be labeled as "antiproclamation"; this antiproclamation at that point constitutes a contrast with the authentic proclamation which may also be present among the symbols being transmitted. Thus the fact that a channel of communication is under churchly hegemony does not exempt it from the problems which arise from admixture of symbols. Indeed, churchly control of the channel may worsen the problems by tending to disguise the diversity of the symbols.

Even where the religious publication manages to hold on to a relatively homogeneous symbol set, avoiding commercial and journalistic tendencies, its readers nevertheless must read the symbolic content of the publication alongside the mixed collection of symbols which they absorb every day from the ordinary communicative sources—television, radio, the daily newspapers. In addition, the brokers of churchly communication are themselves subjected daily to this same barrage of secular communication; and perhaps they are no more critical than the ordinary laymen in the pews.

It is (oddly enough) often the most conservative religious publications which present the most striking and bizarre admixture of secular symbols alongside the sacred ones. The explanation, I believe, is a fairly simple one.

First, nearly everyone who uses mass communications today, even the churchly operative, must reflect some degree of secular content and commitments in his use of symbols. While the degree is controllable, the phenomenon itself of secular admixture is inevitable. Now the "liberal" Christian leader has long ago seen the relevance of all realms of life to religion; so he can admit all kinds of secular content into his communication on the general thesis of its continuity with sacred purposes. Thus did I recently hear an editor of one denomination describe the cookbooks published by his organization as "gospel." To the conservative, however, the principle of continuity threatens sacred symbols, both by promising to empty them of their specialness and by promising to sanctify what is secular. When the conservative religious communicator succumbs—as he must—to the secular, it is often then by importing manifestly secular symbols into his communication channel to stand side by side with manifestly sacred symbols—a combination which, on second thought, proves truly astonishing.

A religious weekly called *The Sword of the Lord*, a strident critic of liberal Christianity and all forms of secularism, is published at Wheaton, Illinois, by a group of explicit and avowed fundamentalists. The newspaper carries this slogan on its masthead:

> An Independent Christian Weekly, Standing for the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, His Blood Atonement, Salvation by Faith, New Testament Soul Winning and the Premillennial Return of Christ.

Following this summary of the fundamentalist creed, the masthead proceeds with a further declaration: "Opposes modernism, worldliness and formalism." A banner headline in the same issue, however, only a few inches away from the proclamation rejecting worldliness, announced the item which the editor evidently considered of primary interest for this issue:

GIANT AUGUST SALE OF SWORD BOOKS
BEGINS TODAY!

A feature about the big sale, subtitled "Something to Sing About!" carried the associate editor's by-line and picture, plus art work. The report of the sale proceeded, in part, as follows:

> I think our announcement with this issue of THE SWORD OF THE LORD that we are launching our tenth annual August sale of values will put a song into many a reader's heart. This is the one time of the year when we let our friends help themselves to anything we publish at one-fifth off the regular price. Every book offered is a full value, not a soiled, damaged, shopworn or other mutilated volume. . . . We are giving a wonderful premium as a gift to all who send in an order of $5.

The resemblance of this sales talk to the commercial jargon of mail-order advertising is unmistakable. Yet it occupies a column adjacent to one of Charles H. Spurgeon's sermons, reprinted verbatim.

Most of the content of this newspaper is more akin to the sermon of Spurgeon's than to the book-sale item. In fact, the newspaper is typified by the reproduction of articles out of nineteenth-century revivalism and the use of orthodox language from this epoch where the articles are new. Yet at points where the publisher's own business interests are dominant, ordinary technical reasoning controls, and the gospel of fundamentalism goes forth fighting for attention against the calculating idiom of modern, worldly salesmanship. The result is "antiproclamation," religious talk about the need for redemption on the one hand (e.g., Spurgeon's sermon), and the modern commercial world's answer to all problems on the other (e.g., the giant sale of Sword books).

This jumbling of proclamatory and commercial symbols is nothing new in American religious publishing. The nineteenth-century reader of the religious press read "not only of missions and ministry and the testimony of those in grace, but reams of copy about bitters." Because religious journals incited great respect in the minds of religious readers, patent medicine advertisers were able to secure for their advertising something like the respect accorded religious doctrines, especially when a minister gave a testimonial for the medicine.

> It took an alert mind to distinguish between the editorial matter and the advertising, the account one pastor gave of his ministry and the tale of another about his "breast complaint." The reader needed mental equipment more subtle and more critical than most people possessed, if he was to resist successfully the advertisements illustrated with woodcuts of the saved, and filled with dark threats of the hearse, the worm, and shroud.[28]

Thus the problem of the milieu in which symbols are immersed antedates the rise of modern mass communications. It is no doubt exacerbated by this rise, and, as I have said, the contrast between proclamatory and commercial symbols is greatest in those segments of Christianity which have held most tenaciously to orthodox formulations of faith. With "liberal" Christianity on the other hand the discontinuous, orthodox symbols of the last century have been abandoned for more flexible symbols which will meet with understanding in the culture. In addition, liberal Christianity seeks to receive and accommodate secular symbols which are continuous with the Christian message.

In any event, we have concentrated on conservative Christianity not because it is a worse offender in the crime of fielding proclamatory symbols in a commercialistic milieu, but rather because it offends in a more visible way.

We may notice the same phenomenon in the electronic and graphic media. Conservative Christianity seems far more willing than liberal Christianity to purchase the right to utilize the great public channels of radio, television, and display advertising in the search for outsiders. After studying display advertisements placed by churches in the Saturday edition of the *Nashville Banner,* I estimate that 90 per cent are placed by congregations of the Church of Christ and the Southern Baptist Convention, two of the more conservative denominations represented in Nashville.

The reliance of conservative church groups on mass media is well illustrated by a "special report" in *Christianity Today* on the outreach of "evangelical churches" in Las Vegas. A Church of Christ minister aimed for "complete coverage of highways with easily read signs," weekly display ads in the two local papers, and extra advertising for revivals. A Baptist pastor reported that he passes out fifty thousand tracts a year, leaving them methodically at trailer parks. Another Baptist recommended newspaper and telephone-directory advertising, and reported that his church has been using radio each week for fourteen years. (In the same article, a Church of Christ minister protested the "constant advertising" of gambling houses.)[29]

In Schenectady, New York, radio station WGY announced in 1957 that it was dropping paid religious broadcasts because of an "imbalance of fundamentalist Protestant theology" among programs scheduled to be heard. Among the programs which the station refused to continue to accept on a paid basis were Billy Graham's "Hour of Decision," "The Lutheran Hour," "The Voice of Prophecy," and "Bible Study Hour." *Christianity Today* attributes the dominance of "evangelical" theology on the air waves to the church life of the 1920's, when radio was new:

> American Protestantism was largely shaped by liberal leaders. In many pulpits the Gospel was no longer preached, and it scarcely survived in the Sunday school. To be evangelized at all, such church constituencies had to be reached from the outside. . . . During that era, the air waves provided the evangelical movement's only strategic

access to "the strangers to the Gospel" both outside and inside the churches.[30]

It seems more likely, however, that "evangelicals" purchase the bulk of radio time for another reason. The conservative Christian assumes the discontinuity of the symbols which he is accustomed to using to convey the gospel message. That is, he does not see these symbols as amenable to the changes and chances of culture (just as he often does not see the symbols as being relevant to the *problems of an entire culture,* but only to the "salvation problem" of the individual). Thus it does not occur to him that the symbols which he uses might be swayed in their net effect on the audience by the symbolic environment—the rest of radio and television programing—into which he immerses his symbols during the time they are being conveyed. Even though he is likely to be using the air-waves to preach a sermon against the debilitating effect of the acids of modernity, the conservative simply does not believe that this modernity (in the form of adjacent symbols bearing commercialistic content) can ever destroy the primitive efficacy of *his* symbols. So he buys newspaper advertising space and television or radio program time. The result is usually "antiproclamation."

The "liberal" Christian, on the other hand, is not so likely to take to the air waves on behalf of his gospel. If he does buy time, it is likely to be a co-operative effort, such as the television programing of the National Council of Churches. The program will be composed largely of *continuous, flexible* symbols—the explicitly religious ones flexible enough to embrace all views represented among the sponsoring denominations; the secular symbols will be continuous with the best humanitariain thought of the day. If the subject matter of the program is the Christian faith of youth, for example, the methods of handling juvenile delinquency put into evidence on the program would pass muster, we may be sure, with Teachers College at Columbia University.

One group, the conservatives, solve the problem of symbolic environment by ignoring it. Another group, the liberals, solve the problem by protective coloration. In neither case, in all probability, does the gospel message get across. For the conservative's symbols must seem completely irrelevant and thus have the net effect of blessing what is left, i.e., the commercial symbols which do seem relevant; and the liberal's symbols seems to bless what is left in a much more direct way, by seeking a point of contact that is not a point of conflict.

We may conclude that the environment of sacred symbols in church-produced communication often has the effect of subtracting from the seriousness of the symbols themselves. Church communicators ought to recognize the obligation, then, to reflect on their real purposes of issuing various publications, from the church bulletin up. They can then attempt to provide a symbolic environment which will lend itself as fully as possible to the goal of communication.

Nearly every church group and religious movement of our time, from the parish men's club which sponsors a radio program to the giant denomination which turns out color movies, feels the throb of the power of mass communication at its disposal. If we have made one discovery in this chapter, it is that the church is tempted in exactly the same way as secular communicators to abuse this power.

It is even more difficult, however, for the church to utilize the mass media responsibly than it is for the secular communicators. For the church simply cannot say *all* it has to say to the outsider through newspapers, films, and electronics. In fact, it cannot say the *most important things* through these instruments.

Yet it cannot get along without them.

NOTES

1. James E. Sellers, "Religion by Telephone," *The Christian Century*, August 7, 1957, p. 939.

2. Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch; tr. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1957), pp. 1-44.
3. See the remarks by Reinhold Niebuhr on differences between the telecasting of religion and the telecasting of science, introduction to *Responsibility in Mass Communication*, by Wilbur Schramm (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), xviii.
4. Report of Committee on Teaching the Bible through Films, presented to the Curriculum Committee, Methodist Board of Education, December 8, 1959, Nashville, Tennessee. Mimeographed. (Italics mine.)
5. *Time*, April 14, 1958, p. 63.
6. John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1955), p. 92; Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (6th ed.; Tübingen: Neomarius, 1949), pp. 170-73. Heidegger's discussion of "curiosity" (*Neugier*) is bracketed with discussions of "chatter" (*Gerede*) (pp. 167-70), and "ambiguity" (*Zweideutigkeit*) (pp. 173-75), as three ways in which human existence takes on "everydayness" (*Alltäglichkeit*) and "publicness" (*Offentlichkeit*).
7. Parker, Barry, and Smyth, *op. cit.*, p. 390.
8. *Time*, July 8, 1957, p. 57.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Jerald C. Brauer, *Protestantism in America: A Narrative History* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 286.
11. Stanley Rowland, Jr., "As Billy Graham Sees His Role," *New York Times Magazine*, April 21, 1957, p. 22.
12. Interview in *Christianity Today*, January 18, 1960, p. 332; see also Graham's "What Ten Years Have Taught Me," *The Christian Century*, February 17, 1960, p. 187.
13. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949. Other researchers, e.g., Irving Lorge, Edgar Dale, and E. W. Dolch, have produced readability formulas and theories which have been more influential in the fields of education and library science than Flesch's work has; but Flesch was the great popularizer of the movement.
14. The influence of readability research on modern mass communications is illustrated by the following articles: Melvin Lostutter, "Some Critical Factors of Newspaper Readability," *Journalism Quarterly*, XXIV (Winter, 1947), 307-314; D. R. Murphy, "Test Proves Short Words and Sentences Get Best Readership," *Printer's Ink*, January 10, 1947, pp. 61-64; Wilbur Schramm, "Measuring Another Dimen-

sion of Newspaper Readership," *Journalism Quarterly*, XXIV Winter, 1947), 289-306.

15. Herman Kogan, *The Great EB: The Story of the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 275.
16. See, e.g., Luther's tract, "On Translating: An Open Letter," *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1915-32) 10-27.
17. Marcel, *Men Against Humanity, op. cit.*, p. 85.
18. See, e.g., *The Meaning of Meaning*, by Charles K. Ogden and I. A. Richards (6th ed., New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1944).
19. *Pomona Progress-Bulletin*, January 19, 1960; *Time*, February 1, 1960, p. 52; *Nashville Tennessean*, August 9, 1960.
20. Ronald Flowers, unpublished study of national public relations practices of the Disciples of Christ, Vanderbilt University, May, 1959.
21. Daniel Jenkins, *The Strangeness of the Church* (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday & Co., 1955), p. 127.
22. See, e.g., "GE Demotes Some Executives for Discussing Prices of Products with Competitors," *Wall Street Journal*, January 6, 1960, p. 26. This news account well symbolizes the feeling at large in American society that an act of honesty is completed only when announcement of it is made.
23. Jenkins, *op. cit.*
24. G. E. Swanson, "Agitation through the Press: A Study of the Personalities of Publicists," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, XX (Summer, 1956), p. 442.
25. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope, tr. Emma Craufurd* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1951), p. 17.
26. *The Christian Century*, December 9, 1959, p. 1,429.
27. Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Philosophy*, p. 92; Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 168. What is gossiped, Heidegger declares here, goes into wide circulation, overcoming that quality of character which makes it possible to judge. "If 'they say it,' the thing is so." In such repetition and spreading of talk, originality gives way and is succeeded by complete failure to stand on one's own merits. Gossip is by no means confined to vocal repetition, "but spreads itself in writing as 'scribbling.' "
28. Gerald Carson, *The Old Country Store* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 244.
29. *Christianity Today*, January 18, 1960, pp. 330, 332.
30. *Ibid.*, February 18, 1957, p. 21.

POSTSCRIPT:

A PRACTICAL APPROACH TO THE OUTSIDER

Discounting the bypaths and detours over which we have been forced here and there, we may say that in essence, we have considered only two major questions in this book.

First, we have asked whether the church can seek out and make contact with the ubiquitous outsider in our culture—not only the obviously unchurched citizen, but also the avowed adherent to the church who, for all his good intentions, scarcely heeds the gospel in making daily decisions.

Second, we have asked whether the church can make use of the modern mass media of communication in going about this task (and if so, how?).

To the first question (despite a strong theological case that can be built on the other side) we have answered that the church not only *can* seek out the outsider *as an outsider*, but that it is *obligated* to do so. We have specified only that the point of contact must be such that it is also a point of conflict between the outsider's "outsideness" and the inner meaning of the gospel.

To the second question, a clear-cut answer has been much more difficult. If the mass media cannot be fully trusted to convey biblical symbols, or to reproduce the gospel via the techniques of publicity, that does not mean they have no place in the church. The public communications agencies can serve us at almost every turn, from the local congregation up to the ecumenical conference. They can aid and comfort the church on its temporal side even where they cannot do more; but they offer no panacea for the problem of reaching the outsider.

Indeed, the mass media are thoroughly dangerous to the church when they are conceived as channels of redemption. Thus, a healthy pessimism and restraint must always accompany our efforts at communicating via the impersonal media.

Unfortunately, we have had to pursue this analysis at a fairly high level of abstraction. For we cannot connect up the requirements of the gospel with the possibilities of, let us say, religious journalism unless we are willing to engage in sober theological inquiry. Still we need not close on a note of abstraction. After all, we should be able to draw from our analysis some practical conclusions.

Full description of the working side of Christian communication is not the purpose of this book, of course. In the rest of our space, however, we can at least indicate some of the chief implications of our study for the practice of seeking the outsider. Let us think here of the task of communicating with the outsider as it is faced by the minister of a local church; what we say should then be of fairly general application for all levels of Christian communication.

1. Admit There Is an Outsider

As Christian leaders and ministers, we are usually loathe to apply the obvious to our own community. Often we encounter the hard verdict from some theologian or philosopher that the organized church seems to have no bright future; or that "the unbelief of countless millions is a fact." [1] We customarily fail to admit how closely this description may correspond to the state of affairs of the churches with which we are directly concerned. We may respond, for example, with glib assurances to the effect that the "program" of our own church is "well supported" financially, "eagerly carried out," and so forth—usually by a "small but dedicated group of Christians." Is carrying out a program enough? And what about those not in this group?

The first practical conclusion that we can draw is that we should take seriously the *existence* of the outsider—not the outsider in general, but the one within (or the one who should be within) our own particular, home-town congregation. In many a community (and in many a congregation) the outsider has never really faced the question of God because (to name one reason) his church has never really faced the question of the outsider.

We should remember above all that religiosity, as well as open indifference to religion, may be the badge of the outsider. We have to look for both kinds of badges.

2. Look for a Point of Contact and Conflict

A point of contact, if it is to serve the Christian faith, must also be a point of *conflict.* It must not confirm the outsider's illusion that he is *already* a pretty good Christian; it must, if anything, shatter that illusion.

Here's a more-or-less indifferent church member who has suddenly manifested a streak of interest in religion. Let's say he has started reading popular books on faith like *A Man Called Peter* and *The Power of Positive Thinking.*

"Aha," thinks his pastor. "A point of contact! His interest in these books shows he's already a pretty religious guy. Now, how can we build on this fine start?"

This is exactly the wrong thing to think. However valuable the book may be to our outsider—and let us stipulate now that these two could be valuable—they do not constitute a point of contact. Such volumes often become best sellers precisely because people are estranged from their churches; when they do not feel they have a place in the local congregation, they tend to seek their religion outside the church. Thus books, through no fault of their own, may yet represent for the outsider an alternative to church life rather than a doorway to it.

One can always argue, of course, that detached religious interests lead the outsider into the church; and this may be so in individual cases. Still, it seems risky to argue as a principle that a person needs the Christian faith because he's *already* religious.

To be sure, the clergyman can't say to his friend who has read

Peale, "I'm ashamed of you." He may well want the friend to read even more Peale; but he should always ask himself if there is reason to suspect the chap is reading Peale in lieu of serious participation in a life of faith within the church.

It's much better to seek out points of contact in the realm of personal problems instead of the realm of personal religious triumphs. (Reading Peale, in a way, is a triumph.) Make connection with the outsider in his grief, his trouble, his failures, his anxiety. He can't be too satisfied with these parts of his being. Then you are in a much better position to contrast the self-managed approach to life of the outsider with the approach offered in the gospel, the approach which beckons the outsider to become an insider.

A corollary: Preach often on the tragic in the lives of your parishioners. If you talk about nothing but how splendid things already are with them, you veil the only thing that promises true splendor in their lives, the glory of the Cross.

3. Cultivate Secular Symbol and Myth

This is only another way of putting the point we have just made. The object of seeking the outsider is to convey the biblical message to him. You cannot, however, do so with the literal, sometimes worn-out orthodox symbols of religion. Rather, you must try to translate the biblical *meaning* into fresh symbols drawn from the life of your outsider.

Here is an example. A Southern minister wished to convey to his segregation-conscious laymen the biblical point of view on brotherhood. Instead of speaking to them directly about "the image of God," he turned to the myth and legend of the Confederacy. He was able to convince several laymen that anyone acting today in the spirit of Robert E. Lee, who had freed his slaves before the Civil War, would not be a segregationist but rather a proponent of such reforms as voting rights for the Negro.

You can't invent secular symbols; they must come from the ethos. And your long-range goal in making use of them must be to impart a distinctly *biblical* teaching (see Point 10 below).

4. Avoid Homiletic Style

Again, let us note that our aim is to impart the *meaning* of the gospel, rather than the conventional shell or framework of accepted symbols in which it may be obscured. The implication should be obvious for the choice of a style in which to communicate. Our preference even at the level of individual words should be governed by the desire to communicate biblical meaning above all; and if conventional religious modes of saying things interfere with this conveyance of meaning, they should be dropped. Communication to the outsider must more and more cease relying on a set, orthodox, *homiletic* approach and style.

We must guard against the "ministerial tone" in everyday speech, the "clerical manner" in social relations, the "sermonizing tendency" in letters, civic club addresses and whatever other communication we embark upon—including the sermon.

Religious leaders (especially theologians) must see themselves more and more as speaking not only "to the church," for this leads to insulation against the world, but also as speaking to those who have rejected the church. The injunction to avoid a homiletic style when dealing with the outsider involves the attempt to write and speak in the language of the man of the street. It is not a matter of popularizing, or of watering down the gospel, or of speaking or writing in a condescending way to the laity; it is a job which demands the best minds in the church but which has all too often been mismanaged by the poorest.

5. Avoid Journalistic Content

The religious communicator who does not attempt to avoid the pitfall we have just described is willing to sacrifice the conveyance of biblical *meaning* in order to hold to a set of simplified, outworn biblical symbols. But there is an opposite pitfall which is even worse; it comes about when the communicator is so anxious to relate his message to the worldview of the outsider that he sacrifices biblical meaning along with the biblical symbols he takes to be obsolete.

A church-owned newspaper once reported a minister's speech under this head: CHRISTIANITY SAID TO BE DEMANDING.

Such a headline represents a high degree of journalistic competence. It is the mark of an editor who "knows how to write heads." It does not take sides, allowing the news "to speak for itself."

To the theological eye this heading, as the utterance of a Christian publication, is disturbing. Why should not a church journal be prepared to affirm the demanding character of Christianity without hiding behind an attribution of the thought to a third party?

No matter how much we must strive, then, for a man-in-the-street *style*, or a journalistic patina, we must never achieve it at the expense of dropping the attempt to convey in all its urgency the full biblical message. We can learn about communication from journalism, but we can learn about the content of Christian communication only from the gospel. Too many ministers attempt to "relate" to their congregations by stressing the "topical" sermon at the expense of the "doctrinal" or "biblical" sermon. Ideally, we should strive in our communication to outsiders (both those without and within the church) to use a *topical style*, but with the unfailing aim of conveying *biblical truth*.

The grand themes of the gospel—man as creature, man as sinner, man as judged, and man as delivered—should be the stuff and fiber of Christian communication. The attempt to find twentieth-century ways of expression should never defeat itself by jettisoning these themes.

6. Choose Media Wisely

It would be difficult to list all the mass communication activities which go on in some churches during a year's time. Here are a few: the sermon itself; newspaper advertising and news accounts of special programs, revival services, election of church school officials and teachers, proceedings of the official board;

broadcasting or televising of the Sunday worship services; preparation of the weekly church bulletin; the official board's decision to subscribe to the denominational monthly magazine for every church home; the youth group's amateurish "poster art" about a car wash. There are many others.

On the basis of our conclusions earlier in this book, we can divide all such communication activities into two basic groups. First, there are those activities aimed at promoting something about the church's institutional life; second, there are those activities aimed at proclaiming, in some way, the content of the gospel. We can be even more practical and say that these two types of communication activities could be called (1) activities designed to *attract attention* to the church and its program, usually through a more or less *dramatic* appeal; (2) activities designed as *follow-through*, which have the goal of intensifying the recipient's understanding or grasp of something about the Christian faith.

As a rule, the electronic media and pictorial art are best for *attracting attention*, for *dramatic effect*, and for *simple, graphic presentation of an appeal*. On the other hand, the work of *follow-through* is best suited to the *written word*, which alone of all the devices of communication permits intense personal perusal at one's own pace.

Use the services of radio, television, and the teen group's poster-makers, then, mainly for attracting the attention of outsiders to your church and its program. Don't try to impart the content of the gospel this way; that's misuse of these media, for they're better at dramatic appeal than at follow-through.

Perhaps you have noticed that when a novel is turned into a motion picture, it tends to lose subtlety and detail. Often the plot has to be so simplified that the movie lacks the depth and meaning of the original. Similarly, don't expect to "teach the Bible" in your church exclusively or even largely through the use of films, movies, slides. These serve best as attention-getters and keepers and as simple, graphic ways of helping to present what you are prepared to teach in depth and detail by means of the written word.

Therefore, in addition to seeking help from radio, television, and other dramatic media in attracting the outsider, you need to improve the *reading activities* in your church so as to help him become a true insider. Encourage group and individual study of the Bible, theology, ethics. Strengthen your church school by more serious attention to teacher training in use of curriculum materials. Recommend good books to laymen and also discuss these with them. Encourage special activities such as play-reading sessions.

Finally, at every point along the line, even in getting publicity, seek out the most *personal* media at your disposal. A telephone call is better than a newspaper advertisement; a visit is better than a telephone call.

7. Respect the Secular Journalist

We must be willing to look beyond ourselves to the secular communicators of press, radio, television, film. For we need their talents. Not that we should depend on them to proclaim the gospel or to "save" people. These are the church's responsibilities. But the secular communicator can lend a hand to the church in various ways while the church goes about its assigned mission.

One of the ways the secular communicator can help is in supporting the church as an earthly institution. This he can do through his abilities at publicizing or at offering factual information. If you're trying to pay for a new educational building, and you're holding a fund-raising bazaar, you can't have a better friend than the local paper or radio station. If you're offering the community Handel's *Messiah* the week before Christmas, you can be thankful the *Daily Journal's* music editor likes to drum up interest for church musicals. Perhaps it's even a good thing if the local TV station decides to have a devotional service on the air at 6:45 every day and asks you to lead them some weeks. Don't, however, expect the station to become a kind of self-sacrificing amplifier of the word of God. That isn't its business; and even when it tries to make it its business, things often don't work out too well, as we have seen.

Above all we must resist the temptation to let the secular communicator "aid" us by promoting the explicit, orthodox symbols. That only makes for a waterlogged religiosity.

Fortunately, the service which the secular journalist or communicator can render the church isn't limited to publicizing, even if it can't extend directly into the realm of proclamation. Perhaps the greatest service of all that we can expect from him is that he can do his own job in a deadly serious fashion. When the newsman is ultimately concerned about *getting the news,* he is doing as much for the church as we have a right to expect. Our contribution is to *encourage* him to report the news fairly, objectively, fully, and with ruthless honesty—this is a more important contribution from him even than piety.

A corollary: Make sure you know what you're doing before you offer unsolicited advice to the local editor or radio station manager. Perhaps the church has been damaged more than in many other ways by preachers who do not know the ins and outs of journalism, and who join in flying-wedge committees to "wait upon" their local editors with various Christian reforms in mind—or, in some cases, with outright suppression of the news in mind.

8. Know the Limits of Mass Media

We have stressed this point so often, it hardly needs elaboration here. All the same a final reminder is in order. The techniques of mass communication possess in themselves no intrinsic power to convince outsiders in situations where ordinary face-to-face methods would not convince. When the preacher or Christian educator puts unwarranted confidence in techniques, he tends to overlook the personal elements that should be a fundament of religious communication. In fact, the great peril of communicative techniques is that they tend to become an illusory substitute for the realities of judgment, faith, hope, and love. It is absurd to think there could be techniques or some combination of methods "by means of which we could reawaken love in souls that appear dead." [2] An awakening of faith can overtake the outsider, in the last analysis, only by means of something that has nothing to do with techniques—the favor of God.

Paradoxically, the conclusion we must draw is not that we should give up the mass media, but rather that we should be more conversant with them. We have to use the media in order to find out just what their limits and dangers are. The minister who has relied habitually on newspaper advertising as his way of getting to the public ought to see what he can do with such strange (to him) techniques as writing a news release, or giving fresh, important items about his church to the radio station, or turning his church bulletin into a more newsworthy sheet. He should freely ask editors, reporters, radio-TV men and public relations executives to tell him more about their professions. Every minister and religious leader in this age must use the mass media in some form whether he wishes to or not, and even whether they are demonic media or not; and so he cannot avoid the duty of studying them with all seriousness—and also with a reasonable amount of distrust.

Finally, the minister should include books within the new field of religious communication on his reading list. They will help him in his preaching as well as in his other communication duties. Here are some titles that will open up the subject:

> Malcolm Boyd, *Crisis in Communication: A Christian Examination of Mass Media* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1957).
>
> F. W. Dillistone, *Christianity and Communication* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956).
>
> Hendrik Kraemer, *The Communication of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956).
>
> Everett C. Parker, David W. Barry, and Dallas W. Smyth, *The Television-Radio Audience and Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955).

David H. C. Read, *The Communication of the Gospel* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1952).

Wilbur Schramm, *Responsibility in Mass Communication* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957).

Three helpful books oriented in more practical directions are:

John W. Bachman, *The Church in the World of Radio-Television* (New York: Association Press, 1960).

Ralph W. Stoody, *A Handbook of Church Public Relations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959).

Roland E. Wolseley, *Writing for the Religious Market* (New York: Association Press, 1956).

For good measure, you might add to your list the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a martyred German theologian who had little to say about mass media, but quite a bit about the outsider; especially his *Ethics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), and *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: Collins Fontana Books, 1959).

9. Don't Seek the Lowest Common Denominator

The resemblance of the word *communicate* to words like *community* and *communion* is not accidental; they all come from the same root notion of "common." To be in communication with someone is to be in a state of "commonness" with him.

Unhappily, the advent of mass communication devices allows us to seek this "commonness" in a slapdash, heedless manner—by throwing away what is particular and special from man to man and by concentrating on the well known, the popular, the easily accessible in our culture. What is common to men now is all too often a set of political and religious catchwords, ideas that rise no higher than the world of sports, conversational themes drawn from last night's TV shows.

Don't let your interest in communicating with the outsider take the form of seeking these lowest levels. What the church has in common with men is the *deepest* about existence, not the nethermost or commonest. It shares with men not the run-of-the mill interests or the conventional activities of life, but rather their predicaments as human beings and the gift of faith which can answer to these predicaments.

Don't trim your sermons to an "average" or "typical" hearer. And above all, don't adapt your image of man for preaching or evangelistic purposes to the image that is portrayed in much of the press, radio, TV, films. Address yourself to the most profound of human problems; resort boldly to the heights of the biblical understanding; bring forward the Judaeo-Christian tradition, letting your scholarship be guided only by the fact that men need to know what this tradition offers them.

Finally, remember in seeking the outsider—both in sermons and in community activities—that the Christian faith has been truncated if it appeals only to the middle-class citizen; look for ways of restoring its full amplitude and appeal to those at both ends of the social spectrum.

10. Follow Through

Christianly speaking, communication with the outsider is in itself an incomplete act. Unless the outsider becomes an insider to the church, communication has failed. The church's most pressing responsibility is the encouragement of Christians in a lively, long-range faith and the instruction of them over a period of time in the meaning of this faith.

Hence the importance of *follow-through* in the work of seeking the outsider.

In one church, the minister succeeded in attracting the interest of an anxiety-ridden businessman who previously had been quite indifferent to religion. As a result of the minister's efforts, the businessman soon discovered a definite use for the Bible. He purchased several copies of a modern translation of the Bible and gave it to his employees with the explanation: "It builds business because they reflect to the customer that we're—uh, a good

Christian firm and that our dealings are based on the Christian faith." [3]

Here the Bible has become an "answer," all right—but a short-range answer which relieves only the most direct anxiety, the businessman's concern about his business. Thus the initial effort that brought this outsider into touch with the Scriptures didn't go far enough. At some early point the businessman's newfound interest should have been converted into the deeper realization that his commercial affairs are not the locus of salvation; that the help God offers him comes as something more than a mere adjunct to a business maneuver.

In the final analysis, then the job of attracting outsiders to the Christian faith is completed only when the church patiently points out the full depths of the Christian message. These depths, we must reiterate, hardly ever appear in view as the result of the opening appeal to the outsider. God's word, if it is apprehended in the full biblical sense, cannot be made one's possession so quickly. It is not a self-help and nothing more; it is rather a perpetual condemnation of one's efforts to deliver himself and a long-range call to the outsider to rest in it and to learn more about its mysteries.

NOTES

1. Karl Jaspers, *Existentialism and Humanism: Three Essays*, tr. E. B. Ashton (New York: Russell F. Moore, 1952), p. 95.
2. Gabriel Marcel, *Men Against Humanity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-42.
3. Parker, Barry, and Smyth, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

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